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ABSTRACT

These three 1995 newsletter issues explore concepts and problems relevant to middle-level education. The cover story for the spring issue examines new trends in educational assessment. Additional briefs in this issue discuss team teaching, school reform as a community-wide effort, and home-school collaboration. The cover article for the Fall issue explores service learning in the middle school. Additional briefs in this issue discuss the hazards of "ditto" or mimeographed worksheets; a magazine for deaf students; the link between one's name and self-esteem in middle school; and use of online computer research in the middle school. The cover article of the Winter issue discusses interdisciplinary team teaching. Additional briefs in this issue discuss National Science Education Standards, and a student-produced educational television show. Each newsletter issue also has additional sections on resources, book reviews, grant information, and learning from the experiences of veteran teachers. (HTH)

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GROUND

NEWS OF MIDDLE-LEVEL EDUCATION SPRING 1995

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Testing 1...2...3...

Educational Assessment Dances to a New Beat

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)"

By Holly Holland

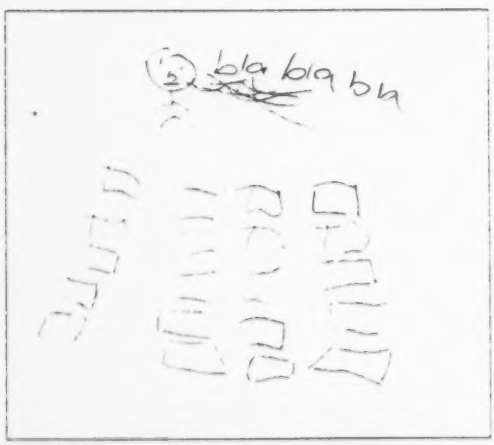
Up until a few years ago, there wasn't much confusion about testing in schools. Teachers served their subjects, then scheduled a day to gauge how well their students had retained it. Once or twice a year, students filled in the bubbles on standardized tests to show how they stacked up against others.

Today, in the high-stakes climate of education reform and accountability, testing has become a hotly debated topic from coast to coast. New-wave testing has attracted more groupies than a rock-and-roll band and spawned its own vernacular, including authentic assessments, portfolios and performance events. If Tom Wolfe were writing a book about the topic, he'd probably call it the *Electric Kool-Aid Critical-Thinking Problem-Solving Teamwork Acid Test.*

So what's a poor middle school teacher supposed to do with all the changes? Make like parents of the Beatles generation: Listen and learn. You may not like the tunes, but you'll have a tough time avoiding them.

According to a recent issue of *R&D Review*, published by the Council for Educational Development and Research, every state is investigating or has implemented alternative assessment strategies, which aim to measure how well students apply knowledge. The trend stems from the concern that traditional, norm-referenced, multiple-choice tests — while relatively inexpensive and easy to administer — do not evaluate the full range of students' knowledge. Norm-referenced tests

COVER STORY continued on p. 4



Student responses to "Think about the teachers and the kinds of things you do in your classroom. Draw a picture of one of your teachers working in his or her classroom."

Student drawings provided by the Center for the Study of Testing, Evaluation and Education Policy at Boston College.

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Taking School Reform into the Community

With funding from several foundations, the Boston-based Institute for Responsive Education will work with teams in five U.S. school districts over the next three years to develop community-based school reform projects.

"What we are offering is not an answer to the questions, 'What's wrong with education, and How can we fix them,' but a way — a structured procedure — for people to answer these fundamental questions themselves at the community level," said Tony Wagner, president of the institute. "This is not top-down reform carried out by 'experts' or bureaucrats, but grass-roots restructuring, carried out by local people in their own schools."

The Responsive Schools Project will involve schools at all grade levels in Chicago; Boston; Las Cruces, NM; Harts, WV; and Flambeau, WI. The participating middle-grades schools include Woodrow Wilson Middle School in Boston, Vista and Picacho middle schools in Las Cruces and Flambeau, a district that has 759 students K-12.

"It is clear by now that without public support, education reform simply isn't going to happen," Wagner said. "...parents want better education for their children, but from Colorado to Connecticut, they are rejecting one reform effort after another."

WANTED

STUDENT WRITERS FOR NEW PUBLICATION

The Scholastic Network on America Online has a new online multimedia magazine written for and by middle and high school students. Online issues of "Press Return" include fiction and non-fiction, and each article is accompanied by a photograph of the contributing author.

The premier issue of "Press Return" included a story about "Denture Man," a local character in Teaneck, NJ, written by Jonathan Sprance, a seventh-grader at Benjamin Franklin Middle School. Courtney Romanofski, an eighth-grader at Windsor Middle School in Windsor, NY, wrote a poem called "I See So Many Things." And Cong Phem, an eighth-grader at St. Athanasius School in Evanston, IL, wrote about life in Dalat, Vietnam, where he was born.

Teachers and students must have a membership in the Scholastic Network to participate. The cost is $7 a month. For more information, send messages to SNPress@aol.com.

Free Math Videos Offered

Through a grant from the National Science Foundation, the Foundation for Advancement in Science and Education (FASE) is offering 5,000 training kits to math and science teachers in grades 7-12. The kits, "Making Connections," include hands-on activities that help students connect math to future careers.

The lessons are based on FASE's successful series, "FUTURES with Jaime Escalante." Each workshop kit contains a video orientation to the workshops, two FUTURES episodes, workshop instructions, handouts and teachers' guides. Applicants must specify how they would use the kit for in-service training and pay an $8.95 shipping charge.

To receive an application, contact FASE Productions, 4801 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 215, Los Angeles, CA 90010. FAX: 213-937-7440. TEL: 213-937-9911.

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Home-School Collaboration Studied

The Educational Research and Services Center, a group of special education researchers in DeKalb Illinois, recently completed a three-year national study that focused on the impact of homework, grading and testing policies and general educational practices on disabled students and their families. Research included focus groups, interviews and national surveys of administrators, teachers and families of disabled students.

With the trend toward inclusion — mainstreaming special-education students into general education classrooms — more disabled students are receiving a large portion of instruction outside self-contained classrooms. The researchers wanted to study the effects of this movement.

For a copy of the summary results, contact Bill Bursuck, associate professor of special education, Northern Illinois University, DeKalb, IL 60115. TEL: 815-753-8441.

Top Staff Development Needs

Cited by Middle Grades Teachers

1. **Strategies for teaching different ability levels in the same class**
2. **Active, hands-on learning**
3. **Alternative/authentic assessment practices**
4. **Working with "at-risk" students**
5. **Integrated curriculum and unit development**
6. **Tailoring instruction to student learning styles**
7. **Inquiry or problem-centered learning**
8. **Involving community resources in education** (tie)
8. **Enrichment activities** (tie)
10. **Development of quality homework**

Source: Five-year study of the effects of implementing modern middle-school practices conducted by the Association of Illinois Middle-Level Schools and the Center for Prevention Research and Development at the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana.

RESOURCES

The National Center for Restructuring Education, Schools and Teaching (NCREST) has published four case studies documenting the impact of alternative assessments in high schools. Copies are $8 for each report from NCREST, Box 110, Teachers College, Columbia University, New York, NY 10027. TEL: 212-678-3432.

"A Practical Guide to Alternative Assessment" (stock no. 611-92140) is $10.95 and "Assessing Student Outcomes: Performance Assessment Using the Dimensions of Learning Model" (stock no. 611-93179) costs $13.95 from the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1250 N. Pitt St., Alexandria, VA 22314. TEL: 703-549-9110.

Center for the Study of Testing Evaluation and Educational Policy, Campion Hall, Boston College, Chestnut Hill, MA 02167. TEL: 617-552-4521.

"Dilemmas and Issues for Teachers Developing Performance Assessment in Mathematics: A Case Study of the Effects of Alternative Assessment in Instruction, Student Learning and Accountability Practices," from the National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards and Student Testing (CRESST) at UCLA Graduate School of Education, 405 Hilgard Ave., 1320 Moore Hall, Los Angeles, CA 90024-1522. (Cite order no. TR-364, 31 pages, $4 prepaid.) Also available on disc in Macintosh HyperCard is "Alternative Assessments in Practice Database." The disc and manual cost $15 plus shipping and handling. Internet users can download the database free from gopher.sce.ucla.edu.

The Portfolio as a Learning Strategy, by Carol Porter and Janell Cleland, 1994, Heinemann publishing, 361 Hanover St., Portsmouth, NH 03801-3912. Price: $17.50. TEL: 1-800-541-2086.

"Innovative Assessment: A Bibliography of Assessment Alternatives: Social Studies," is available from the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 101 SW Main St., Suite 500, Portland, OR 97204-3297. (Cite order no. NL-1094-RD, 23 pages, $4.75 prepaid.)

"A Database and Catalog of Alternative Assessments," is available on disc in Claris Filemaker Pro software (specify MS-DOS or Machintosh systems when ordering) from the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory ($9.80 prepaid). The disc comes with a manual containing complete instructions as well as a catalog describing each assessment. Internet users can download the database free from gopher.nwrel.org.

WCER Highlights is published four times a year by the Wisconsin Center for Education Research, School of Education, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1025 W. Johnson St., Madison, WI 53705. Paul Baker, Editor. TEL: 608-263-4200.

focus more on how students compare with each other, the argument goes, and less about whether all children have learned.

"Even should a group of students achieve at high levels, some members will be forced to occupy the losers' slots in a norm-referenced system," Betty Wallace and William Graves write in their new book, *Poisoned Apple: The Bell-Curve Crisis and How Schools Create Mediocrity and Failure*. "Educators and parents tend to become complacent about student performance as long as it is at or above average, though the average by world standards may be low. It would be of no consolation for a pilot to learn that his airplane is flying higher than average if it is still headed into the side of a mountain."

"SOME of these drawings give us pause for concern and ideas for change... but some are also encouraging."

Instead of just using multiple-choice tests, proponents of alternative assessments call for a broader range of measurements, including timed essay questions; portfolios that demonstrate students' progress through a collection of their work over time; and performance events that require students to research, discuss and analyze information to solve multi-part questions.

Skepticism and confusion about the new assessments abound, however. During a conference at Boston College last summer about using assessment to guide middle school reform, participants complained of frequent and inconsistent changes in testing policy. A Louisville participant noted that since 1983, Kentucky has changed its statewide testing system five times. A Chattanooga participant discussed the inconsistencies between reform curriculum and what's measured on Tennessee's multiple-choice test. And a Long Beach participant complained that traditional tests don't take into account new instructional methods.

A discussion group at NMSA's Urban Conference in Milwaukee last January also showed that teachers' understanding of new assessment strategies varied considerably. Writing portfolios seemed to perplex teachers the most. One Milwaukee teacher described the difficulty of having to read and shepherd 150 student portfolios at a time. A teacher from Chicago talked about the tough task of persuading colleagues outside the English department that portfolios were worthwhile.

Others described alternative assessment strategies that had worked. A teacher from Baltimore said her school had studied portfolios for two years before introducing them as an additional tool of evaluation, not as the school's only means of testing. The ability to choose made teachers much more willing to try portfolios, she said.

A principal from Las Vegas said parents have become strong supporters of portfolios at her school because "they want to see more of their children's work."

Julie Rose, who teaches French and English at Webster Middle School in Milwaukee, said portfolios have helped motivate low-achieving students who usually "don't have much to be proud of."

Whatever assessment methods they try, middle school educators should carefully consider the effects on student achievement. In a series of studies, researchers at the National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards and Student Testing (CRESST) at UCLA, have found that "performance assessments can play a positive role in changing classroom practices. But the changes are slow and cannot be expected to occur without a strong system of support and a willingness to take risks. Moreover, critical results that will address questions about the effects of the new assessments on student learning are not yet available."

CRESST researchers have found that it's tough to measure the quality of performance assessments because they are being designed by so many different groups with so many different assumptions and training. Scoring, in particular, has been difficult.

For example, a recent outside evaluation of Kentucky's new assessments, which include portfolios and performance exams in a high-stakes accountability measure for schools, found them to be "not sufficiently reliable." Part of the reason is that teachers have had trouble scoring the tests consistently. While the evaluation said Kentucky's tests have helped improve writing and instruction, the researchers cautioned that by not including multiple-

choice questions, the tests may keep students from developing basic skills.

A study of Vermont's requirement that all fourth- and eighth-graders complete writing and math portfolios found similar scoring inconsistencies.

But as Wallace and Graves suggest in *Poisoned Apple*, the testing problems might have more to do with old expectations than new methods. The value of portfolios, they write, is in finding out whether students have met certain goals, not how they compare to each other.

Vermont "goes through an expensive and cumbersome process to grade portfolios and compare them to others prepared by students of the same age," the authors write. "So about half of the state's students will be left feeling their work is below average — hardly a reward for earnest work."

Researchers at the Center for the Study of Testing, Evaluation and Educational Policy at Boston College have developed a series of assessments that measure student achievement and student attitudes about school. The goal, said researcher Katherine Cress, is to produce a thorough record of students' knowledge and understand their relationship to the school community. In addition to multiple-choice tests, the researchers suggest using other assessments, including open-ended questions, performance tasks and student-attitude surveys, interviews or drawings.

In their work with schools using the Co-NECT school model — one of nine innovative school designs funded by the New American Schools Development Corp. — the Boston College researchers found that teachers and students often have different ideas about what takes place in the classroom. Student drawings reveal their images of schools. A picture of a teacher lecturing to rows of empty desks, for example, might indicate that the student doesn't feel included in her own learning. Such examples can help teachers start conversations about what 's working — and what's not — in their schools.

"Some of these drawings give us pause for concern and ideas for change," Cress said, "but some are also encouraging."

Cress suggests that schools build their assessments around standards that are clearly understood by teachers, students and parents. For example, she suggests clarifying the school's expectations for the end of eighth grade; anchoring the expectations, or standards, in performance tasks; charting students' performance from the time they enter middle school to the time they leave for high school; and adjusting instruction to ensure that all students meet the expectations by the end of eighth grade.

"Though such a scenario sounds simple," Cress said, "it can become enormously complex when dealing with hundreds of middle school students taking dozens of different classes over the three-year period typical of middle schools."

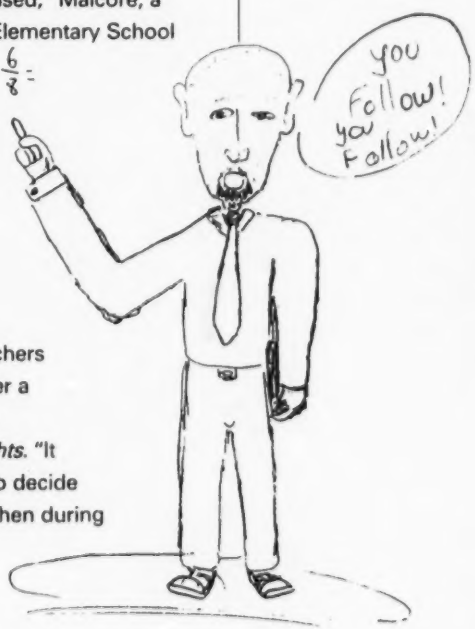
Wisconsin teachers are starting to appreciate just how hard it is to change the way they test students. A new state performance assessment system for elementary, middle and high schools is being developed and should be in place by the fall of 1996. According to *WCER Highlights*, a publication of the Wisconsin Center for Education Research at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, 75 state teachers helped write the assessments and another 70 teachers tested them out in the field.

Tami Malcore, who wrote and tested some of the science tasks, said students' responses to the new assessments were revealing.

"If they couldn't begin, or if they weren't sure about how to answer, that signalled to me that some instructions need to be revised," Malcore, a sixth-grade teacher at Lakeview Elementary School in Neenah, WI, told *WCER Highlights*.

Ron Szymanski, curriculum specialist for the Milwaukee Public Schools who coached teachers as they developed the assessment tasks, discovered that it takes time to make changes work.

"In the first year the teachers were struggling, trying to discover a framework for curriculum units," Szymanski said in *WCER Highlights*. "It was a laborious process, trying to decide what the units should look like. Then during the second year, they had an easier time because they had some context."



Holly Holland is editor of Middle Ground.

2-Teacher Teams

Promote Integrative Curriculum

By Wallace M. Alexander

A growing number of teachers have recognized that two-person, team-teaching gives them the freedom to organize instruction, time and assessment in ways that makes learning meaningful for young adolescents.

Using teaming in middle schools isn't new. The approach usually is considered fundamental to the middle school concept. But how to best organize middle school teams is a point of debate nationwide.

Since 1990 when NMSA published Dr. James Beane's landmark monograph, *A Middle School Curriculum: From Rhetoric to Reality,* conversations in middle schools throughout the country have focused on how to implement an organic curriculum where "subjects" are truly integrated. The goal is a curriculum where natural learning is reinforced instead of stifled and where content and skills are presented within the context of issues that concern young adolescents.

Unfortunately, my experiences over the past three years as a student and teacher-researcher have persuaded me that traditional middle school teams — usually four or five teachers specializing in separate core subjects — often hinder the development of what Beane calls an "integrative curriculum."

Traditional middle school teams were designed with interdisciplinary instruction in mind, a structure in which each teacher maintains responsibility for a separate subject area. The difficulty arises when these teams try to identify units that can accommodate math, science, language arts and social studies equally. And where do the arts fit in? Because of this stratified structure, teachers invest huge amounts of time trying to give equal attention to each subject. The result: relationships that are often forced and ineffective.

Natural learning does not make distinctions between disciplines. In the real world people don't approach problem-solving by first asking themselves what part of the problem is math, science or language arts. Why then do middle schools persist in using a structure that fragments information and retards the general integration of knowledge?

Is there an alternative? Yes, definitely. In 1992 this question prompted me to undertake a year-long, classroom-based inquiry into team organization with an emphasis on integrative curriculum (Alexander, 1993). My first breakthrough was establishing an ongoing relationship with Kathy McAvoy, Dennis Carr and their sixth-grade team at Mt. Jefferson Junior High School in Lee,

ME. While these two teachers had definite content-area responsibilities, neither was locked into single subject instruction. Both actively integrated curriculum within their own instructional blocks and practiced student-centered learning. However, through their own evolutionary process, McAvoy and Carr were still one step away from having a truly integrative curriculum. Though taking the next step seemed a natural progression, it required a great deal of courage and commitment from the entire school community. McAvoy and Carr's team have nearly completed the second year of a tremendously successful integrative program.

My research connected me to other successful, similarly organized teams in several middle schools. My inquiries also led to my current job as a member of a two-teacher, multi-aged (grades 6-8) middle school team in Sedgwick, ME. My team has been using an integrative approach for three years now, and there is no turning back.

In our approach, teams are really partnerships of teaching generalists who share small groups of students and truly team teach. This structure directly addresses several middle school principles:

1. Two-person teaching teams support block scheduling. Teachers don't have to vie for equal time slots to deliver their content and students don't have to change classes every 45 to 50 minutes.

2. Two-person teaching teams provide flexibility. Students and teachers can be grouped in a variety of ways. We have found that 40-60 students is a manageable number for large group activities. In addition, one teacher can supervise a large group while the other teacher can meet with individual students or smaller groups.

3. Close relationships between students and teachers develop naturally throughout the school day, and adviser/advisee functions can be integrated into the larger curriculum. According to Van Hoose and Strahan (1988), young adolescents need to establish this kind of close relationship with adults other than their parents. Garvin (1987) also found that middle school parents wanted their children to have such relationships.

4. Coordinating team activities becomes easier with a smaller number of teachers. Team-teaching requires an enormous amount of coordination, communication and consensus. Decision-making and compromise, while not guaranteed, seems easier with a team of two than five or six.

5. Two-person teams help break down the separate subject instructional approach. With this approach, teachers naturally think beyond single subjects. Instruction focuses on the content and skills that students need to complete the task at hand.

Is two-person team-teaching the answer to the question of how best to organize teams for integrative curriculum? At the very least it is a viable alternative to traditional interdisciplinary teams. A growing number of teachers have recognized that two-person team-teaching gives them the freedom to organize instruction, time and assessment in ways that makes learning meaningful for young adolescents.

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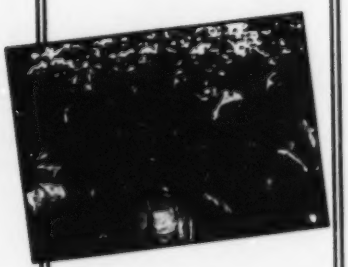
Wallace Alexander teaches at Sedgwick Elementary School in Sedgwick, ME.

History Alive: Engaging All Learners in the Diverse Classroom

History Alive: Engaging All Learners in the Diverse Classroom, published by Teachers' Curriculum Institute, Addison-Wesley Publishing Co., 1994, 180 pages, $23.95. ISBN 0-201-81837-X.



Review by Rick Haas

I was asked to give my reactions to *History Alive* because I am a middle school history teacher. The plan was that I would skim through this book, select two or three self-contained lessons and try them out in my classroom.

When I started to read the book, however, I quickly realized that the value of the book is not in providing a list of unrelated suggestions that you might plug in the day between teaching units or the day before a vacation. Instead, *History Alive* presents a philosophy of teaching history and provides detailed strategies for implementing a hands-on curriculum for students during the course of an academic year. I would recommend reading the book over the summer when you might have the time to rewrite your whole curriculum. I am not predicting that you will be moved to revolutionize your methods by reading this book, but I do think you will gain some ideas that might enhance your teaching.

The *History Alive* approach is based on three premises that are probably familiar to anyone who has taken graduate-level education courses: Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences; Elizabeth Cohen's work in cooperative learning; and Jerome Bruner's notion that all students can learn through a spiraling curriculum that takes them progressively to more difficult concepts through step-by-step self-discovery. *History Alive* devotes about 20 pages to an explanation of these education theories, and the remaining pages contain tools for implementing this active approach to teaching history.

The interactive slide lecture was, by far, the most intriguing to me. The book's premise is that only the most linguistically gifted students can really learn from teacher-directed lectures and discussion. I can easily imagine the benefits of projecting slides on the wall from a particular period in history and asking students to come forward to talk about what they see as they point to pictures.

I also liked the strategy for using experiential exercises to encourage students to "feel" what it must have been like to be a soldier in a trench war or an American labeled a communist during the McCarthy era.

However, some of the strategies, particularly group activities and writing exercises, contained little new material. Some of the methods described, such as the interactive notebook or ways to create cooperative and tolerant classrooms, seemed more like reminders of common sense classroom management than curriculum innovations.

Many of the strategies mentioned in the book require extra resources. The authors suggest making your own supplies. But just in case you want to purchase some *History Alive* materials (mild cynicism noted), an order form is conveniently located in the back of the book. A unit costs $250-300; a year's worth of materials costs $2,000.

I don't plan on spending any of my school's money on this program. But I am glad that I read *History Alive*. It serves as an excellent reminder that many middle school students learn more by getting actively involved in history lessons than just reading, listening and taking notes.

Rick Haas teaches math and history at Louisville Collegiate School.

The Peopling of America: A Timeline of Events that Helped Shape Our Nation

The Peopling of America is a true value. With a price under $10, the book includes a running timeline of comparative historical data for each of the six major ethnic groups that populated the United States. The volume I reviewed covered the time period through 1880.

This book offers so much interesting and useful information on American settlers with a timeline format that includes data on Native American Indians, African-Americans, Mexican-Americans, Puerto Ricans, Asian-Americans and European-Americans. It is a rare book that is valuable both for world and U.S. history teachers.

The book's timeline format can lead to exciting projects that challenge students and provide insights not usually available to a variety of learners. Students can construct a mural or illustrated timeline, which provides the opportunity for a great lesson on cause and effect. A gifted student may be asked to track the start of slavery or the persecution of Jews throughout history while other students can relate world events to specific issues in their study of individual racial and ethnic groups.

Here's an example: In 1442 Antam Gongalvez, a Portuguese explorer who served under Prince Henry the Navigator, kidnapped several members of African nobility. He received as ransom 10 black Africans, males and females. He sold them in Lisbon. This event marked the beginning of the African slave trade.

At about the same time, in what is now New York State, the Great Binding Law was proclaimed by the Heron prophet, Deganawidah, that established the six Native American nations of Onedia, Onondaga, Mohawk, Seneca and Cayuga. Leaders of the six nations formed laws and a system of government that some believe was used as a model by the Founding Fathers.

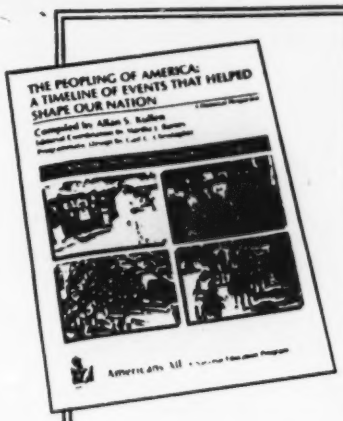
Meanwhile, in Japan, shoguns passed an anti-Christian decree after seeing what had happened in other countries who let missionaries in during this period.

Using just these three entries, students can develop an understanding and appreciation of the heritage of many peoples and cultures. The comparative format of this book offers students the ability to piece together significant events in U.S. history with the additional perpective of the sophisticated Native American culture, which often is passed over in favor of the better-known European cultures. In addition, by reading the Native American section, students can better understand the impact that Hispanic, African and European settlers had in American history.

It seems especially useful to have Hispanic and Asian entries in this book because those two ethnic groups represent the fastest-growing population groups in middle schools. Most of the current social studies information focuses on the heritage of European and African groups.

My chief complaint is that this book really needs an index. The table of contents is extremely simplistic, and doesn't offer much help to students. In addition, a bibliography and recommended resources would be useful.

Alan Haskvitz is a social studies teacher and department chairman at Suzanne Middle School in Walnut, CA.



The Peopling of America: A Timeline of Events that Helped Shape Our Nation, compiled by Allen Kullen, printed by Americans All, 5760 Sunnyside Ave., Beltsville, MD 20705, 1991, 370 pages, $9.95. TEL: 301-982-5622. ISBN 1-56192-034-7.

Review by Alan Haskvitz

SNAPshots

Profiles and news about award-winning schools and teachers...

Maxwell Middle School in Tucson, AZ, was one of five schools in the country — and the only middle school — cited by *Business Week* magazine in February for its pioneering efforts to use technology throughout the school community.

Maxwell will receive $4,000, half of which is supposed to cover the cost of sending staff members to national conferences and workshops so they can share their successes with other educators. In addition, *Business Week* will write about the school's accomplishments in a separate publication, *Schools in the Age of Technology*, that will be distributed later this year.

To meet the criteria for the *Business Week* competition, schools had to demonstrate that they used technology schoolwide, improved student achievement by using technology and designed a technology program that could be adapted by other schools, said Charlotte Frank, vice president for research and development at McGraw-Hill Inc., which owns *Business Week*.

At Maxwell, all students in grades seven and eight have access to an individual, high-speed computer with CD-ROM during core curriculum courses — language arts, math, science and social studies. In addition, 60 students at a time can take laptop computers home. All 315 computers in the school are connected through a local-area network. The school district also bought a computer for every Maxwell teacher to use at home; all teachers and administrators have access to school records and other information through the district's wide-area network.

At Maxwell, computer instruction is integrated into regular subjects. Principal Don Collier said he doesn't allow anything on the computer system "that is not a tool. Nothing smacks of a textbook."

Teachers attend intensive computer training workshops every summer, and they hold daily team meetings to discuss curriculum and technology integration.

How did an urban middle school where 90 percent of the students receive free- and reduced-price lunches manage to become a national pacesetter in technology?

By believing that it could.

In 1990, Tucson school district officials held informal meetings to discuss how to prepare students for the 21st century. Jesse Rodriguez, director of information technologies for Tucson Unified School District #1, said he wanted to prove that low-achieving students could succeed if they were given the tools to develop real-world work skills. Maxwell, with about 600 students, seemed a logical place to start.

"We wanted to make a systemic change in the educational system," said Collier. "We call it the Fourth R. That's Reading, Writing, Arithmetic and Ready for the World of Work."

Rodriguez said he spent $40,000 from his own technology budget to upgrade the school's electrical wiring. He also moved 120 computers from a district warehouse to Maxwell, where Collier already was leading education reforms.

Collier split the seventh-graders into two representative groups: one team of 120 students and four teachers received 20 computers per classroom; the other team, a control group, did not. After two years, the pilot group showed increased achievement scores, higher attendance rates and greater parental involvement. Students in the control group mostly stayed the same or lost ground in those categories during the same period.

While the experiment was important for research purposes, Collier said, it alienated teachers on the control team who felt cheated because their students had not done as well as those on the pilot team. Several teachers transferred, he said.

Last year, Rodriguez said, officials from Compaq Computer Corp. donated $1.5 million worth of computer hardware — about 300 computers — to the school. Microsoft donated computer software, he said.

Rodriguez said the *Business Week* award sends a strong message to the local community that the project was worthwhile.

"The objective of this from the beginning is that students will leave school with the skills to survive in the real world, " he said, "and be productive for the company that hires them from day one."

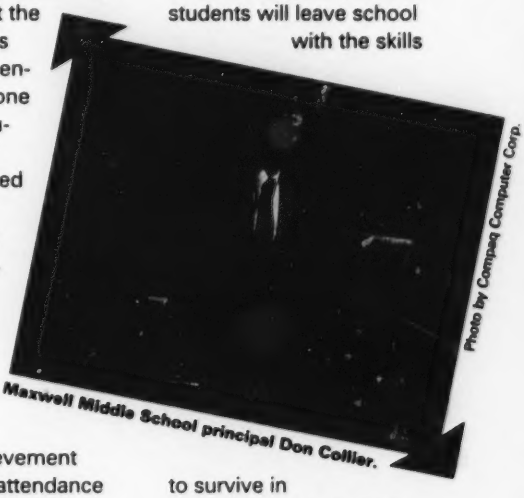


Photo by Compaq Computer Corp.

Maxwell Middle School principal Don Collier.

To receive a copy of Schools in the Age of Technology, *contact Charlotte Frank at McGraw-Hill Publishing Co., TEL: 212-512-6512.*

11

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AWARDS

Two middle-grades teachers have won Teacher Incentive grants from the National Art Education Association in Reston, VA. The grants carry a cash award of $500 and support projects that promote arts education and student achievement.

Sharon Anne Propst, who teaches at Lexington Middle School in Independence, MO, received an award to begin an art club next school year. In her proposal, Propst said students from the rural community will use the money to take monthly field trips to the Kansas City Renaissance Festival, the Nelson-Atkins Art Museum, the Kansas City Art Institute and other cultural sites. In addition, she said, professional artists will work with her students on specific projects.

"Due to the last few years of budget cutbacks," Propst wrote, "students are not easily exposed to many of the opportunities to experience the arts outside the classroom setting...My aim is to show my students that the arts are alive and well and a vital part of our communities."

Mary-Michael Billings, who teaches at Hichborn Middle School in Howland, ME, received a grant to expand the arts education program at her rural school. During the 1994-95 school year, she wrote, Maine expanded the criteria for giftedness to include artistically talented students, but the local school district offers no art program at the elementary or middle school level.

"The result of this situation is that students are given few opportunities to explore materials, to analyze imagery, to experiment with self-expression or to develop drawing skills," Billings wrote. "And it also brings into question the purpose of identifying gifted students when the school community does not even provide the basics in art education."

Billings proposes to use the grant money to develop an arts curriculum at Hichborn focusing on video animation.

The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards certified 81 middle-level teachers from 23 states in January, the first group to pass the board's rigorous assessment of teaching practices and skills. Fewer than one-third of the 289 teachers who completed the field tests in the "early adolescence/generalist" category earned certificates.

About 250 other teachers who took the "early adolescence English/language arts" category should receive the results of their tests in June. The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards plans to develop assessments in a total of 30 categories by the year 2000.

To complete the certification process — which ran about three months last year — teachers had to prepare a narrative description of their work with a class during a three-week period, including detailed experiences with three students. The teachers also had to submit videotapes of themselves teaching, provide a written analysis of the tapes and answer questions about them in an oral exam.

Several school districts are providing incentives for teachers to complete the certification process, including Rochester; Boston; St. Paul; Marlboro County, SC; Vancouver, WA; Hammond, IN; and Fairfax County, VA. In addition, several states offer similar inducements including North Carolina, which will give teachers a 4-percent salary increase for obtaining National Board certification.

GRANTS

The National Art Education Association has started a new grant program to help teachers implement the national Visual Arts Standards. The new Halvorsen Professional Development Fund will provide annual scholarships in amounts up to $1,000 each to selected art teachers whose proposals focus on efforts to understand and implement the arts standards. The grants may be used to pay for tuition, room and board and study materials.

The Association also funds the Teacher Incentive Grants, the Mary McMullan Fund and the Research Grants in Arts Education.

Applications for all the grant programs will be available beginning in April. Write to the National Art Education Association, 1916 Association Drive, Reston, VA 22091-1590. TEL: 703-860-8000.

Have you or your school won a national education award? Do you have information about interesting funding sources for teachers? Did you learn some important lessons while writing a successful grant application? Share your ideas and stories with other middle-level teachers by writing to Editor, Middle Ground, National Middle School Association, 2600 Corporate Exchange Drive, Suite 370, Columbus, OH 43231. FAX: 614-895-4750. We'll print the most interesting suggestions in future issues.

Monday Morning

Practical ideas and strategies from the experiential files of middle school teachers.

LOLLYGAGGERS GET VOICE LESSONS IN SAN DIEGO

Catherine Neale Watson used to have problems with students who straggled to class late. Now students run down the halls, dive through doorways and push each other aside to make sure they're on time for her humanities class at Kroc Middle School in San Diego.

When students arrive after the bell, Watson gives them a detention that most young adolescents loathe — singing or dancing in front of the class.

"They're never late now," she said.

Watson said the method works because she spends considerable time at the beginning of each school year explaining why she punishes latecomers. She also helps her students understand why people behave inappropriately — to gain power, to get attention, to seek revenge or to avoid failure — so students can recognize the signs in themselves and others.

"Research says that the consequences have to be immediate and specific," she said. "A big part is firmness. I have kids who say, 'No, I won't do it.' I say, 'Everyone in my class does it.'"

Case in point: Watson intentionally arrives late to class once or twice a year so she will have to sing and dance publicly, too.

ACARIASIS TO ZAPATEADO!

Henderson Students Turn the Dictionary Inside Out to "Stump the Teacher"

Fridays during football season, students at North Junior High School in Henderson, KY, have a hard time concentrating on academics. So social studies teacher Mike Haile grabs the dictionary and does an end run around boredom.

His strategy calls for a session of "Stump the Teacher," a game that lets antsy adolescents satisfy their competitive urges, have some laughs — and learn something in the process.

The goal: to practice dictionary skills, improve their vocabulary knowledge and locate words that Haile doesn't know. Working in teams, students playing "Stump the Teacher" comb the dictionary for unusual words — no proper nouns or place names — then write them on the blackboard for the class to see. A scorer keeps track of Haile's and the other teams' points.

"I have been beaten at this game before," Haile said. "But it's fun, and it's a good day off my feet."

Haile said he can't claim credit to "Stump the Teacher." He once read in *Reader's Digest* about a middle school teacher who had tried the game, so he decided to modify it for his own classroom. One of Haile's rules: the definition he gives has to be close to the meaning of the word, but not exactly right.

During one competition last fall, Haile lost points on words such as offal, dysprosium and zeugma. But he easily dispatched definitions for xenophobia, exude, rebel, establish, nom de plume, zing and zoroastrian. When the bell rang to dismiss the class, Haile was ahead 15-10.

"How many times have you read the dictionary?" one student asked in amazement.

"Cover to cover, about three times," Haile said. "But I read bits and pieces every night."

The truth: Haile has memorized most of the words beginning with the letters y and z because students routinely head to the end of the dictionary for stumpers. He also reads encyclopedias for fun.

"I'm not as smart as they think I am," he said.

Do you have a good instructional idea or experience that you want to share with other middle school teachers? Send a brief explanation to Editor, Middle Ground, National Middle School Association, 2600 Corporate Exchange Drive, Suite 370, Columbus, OH 43231. FAX: 614-895-4750. Please include daytime and evening telephone numbers.

Focus on the Earth: Houston Students Publish Magazine to Showcase Middle School Science Achievements

Some people get into magazine publishing because they dream of being entrepreneurs or because they want to carve a niche in the literary world.

Linda Knight got into magazine publishing because she wanted to find some additional uses for middle school science fair projects.

POWER in the middle

Teachers and students making powerful progress in the classroom

A teacher at Revere Middle School in Houston, TX, Knight and her seventh-grade students publish *Earth Focus: A Student Environmental Journal,* a slick, full-color, semiannual publication that includes science articles and experiments written and conducted by middle and high school students around the country.

"Everybody in this day and age can do word processing and run off a newsletter on the (copying) machine," Knight said. "We wanted this to be like National Geographic (magazine) for kids."

Knight, who is president of the National Earth Science Teachers Association, has placed advertisements in trade publications to encourage student submissions. One of her students, Jonathan Tanoos, put information about *Earth Focus* on America Online and Prodigy computer networks.

"This magazine is very interesting," Jonathan said in an interview. "It's almost like the kids will understand it better than a science book. They can relate to it better...The environment is important, and we've got to do something to help it."

Jonathan said he regularly gathers information for articles from sources on e-mail, including details about threats to the dolphin population near the Galapagos Islands and efforts by students in Estonia to clean up contaminated water sources near their home.

Each *Earth Focus* issue includes an article about endangered species and at least one student science experiment. Recent issues featured projects to monitor water quality of a stream and a database of earthquakes matched to calendar phases of the moon. An article in the current issue describes a wetlands site that students in a Louisiana middle school have created in the school's outside courtyard.

A recent newspaper article about the endangered status of the attwater prairie chicken motivated one Revere student to visit a reserve where he researched his own article and took color photographs of the chickens for *Earth Focus.*

Knight has been successful at finding outside groups to pay the publication costs of *Earth Focus* — which run about $4,000 for a typical edition. Four years ago, Knight received $7,500 from the National Science Foundation by winning a Presidential Award for Excellence in Science and Mathematics Teaching. She used the money to buy a laser printer and publish the first two issues of the magazine. The Exxon Corp., one of Revere's business partners, paid for the second year of publication. Houston businessman, Gordon Cain, paid for the current year's issues and will pay for two issues next school year, she said.

But Knight has bigger ambitions. She'd like to find corporate or foundation sponsors to buy classroom sets of *Earth Focus* for schools around the country, then agree to work with students to help them research and write articles for publication.

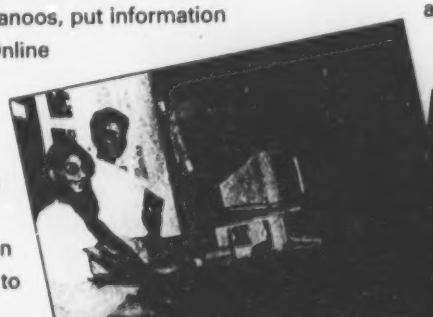
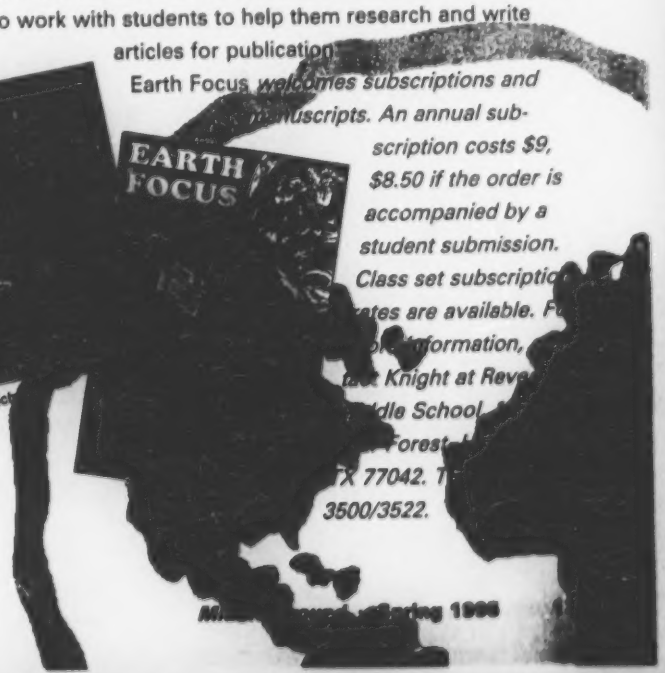


Photo provided by Revere Middle Sch



Earth Focus welcomes subscriptions and manuscripts. An annual subscription costs $9, $8.50 if the order is accompanied by a student submission. Class set subscription rates are available. For more information, contact Knight at Revere Middle School, Forest ... TX 77042. Telephone 3500/3522.

MG FAXBACK

This is what you thought...

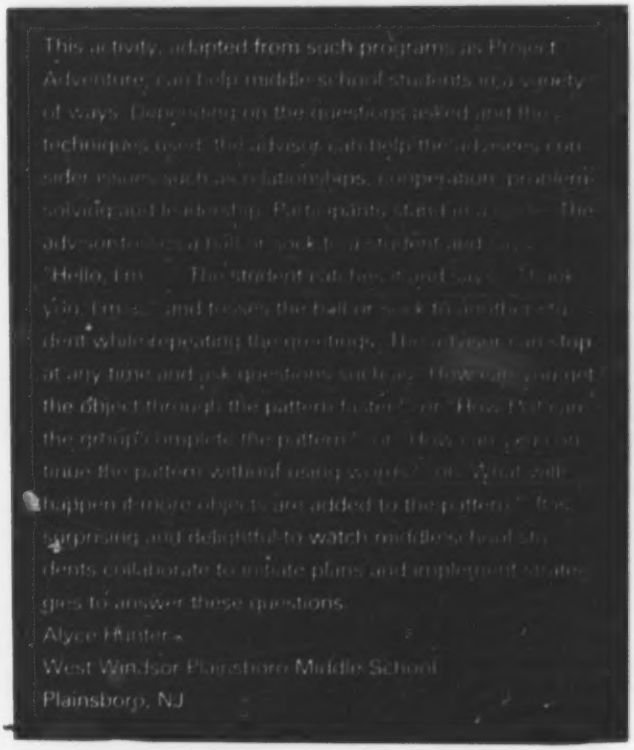
In previous issues of *Middle Ground*, we asked you to share your best advisor/advisee activities. Here are some of the responses:

We've had great success with a student-hatched version of our Thursday middle school assemblies during our advisory period. Students asked if they could "do" the talk for their peers instead, just like we had adults coming in to share their careers and talents. It was a hit! So far, we've had an eighth-grade electric guitar demonstration, two dirt bikers and a mountain biker in full regalia. The students are mesmerized by their peers.

Nancy Nixon
Ouray Middle School
Ouray, CA

Each Friday during our advisory period we meet in the gymnasium for competitions and exercise. Our advisory program is called "PRIDE," which is an acronym for Planning, Reading, Interests (clubs) Develop and Exercise. Friday's activities include various types of events. We hold tournaments for tug of war, two-minute volleyball, free throw relays and relay races. We also have a pentathalon track meet for advisory groups, a mini "500" tricycle race and the "Mountie Winter Olympics," which consists of 10 events that are scored like a track meet. We count boys' and girls' scores separately, then combine them to determine team winners. Awards are usually donuts or pizza. We also have non-competitive events on Friday such as skits, talent shows, convocations, pep sessions for sports and academics and honors day. We tie in our interdisciplinary units with advisory periods, which makes a great combination. We encourage parents to get involved in the competitions as judges, chaperones and spectators.

Steve House
Southmont Junior High School
Crawfordsville, IN



This activity, adapted from such programs as Project Adventure, can help middle school students in a variety of ways. Depending on the questions asked and the techniques used, the advisor can help the advisees consider issues such as relationships, cooperation, problem-solving and leadership. Participants stand in a [illegible] The advisor begins a ball or object [illegible] student and says, "Hello, I'm [illegible]." The student catches it and says, "Hello, I'm [illegible]" and tosses the ball or object to another student while repeating the greetings. The advisor can stop at any time and ask questions such as: How can you get the object through the pattern faster? or: How can you get the group's complete the pattern? or: How can you continue the pattern without using words? or: What will happen if more objects are added to the pattern? It's surprising and delightful to watch middle school students collaborate to initiate plans and implement strategies to answer these questions.

Alyce Hunter
West Windsor-Plainsboro Middle School
Plainsboro, NJ

This is a fun teacher-advisor activity. Here's how it works: Students sit on chairs in a circle. Students move one chair to the right if they answer YES to the question being asked. (Do you have braces? Are you older than 12? Have you ever been to the ocean? Do you like spaghetti?) Students stay where they are if they answer NO to a question. Yes, students will end up on other students' laps at times! If students wind up being a "sandwich" — sitting on a lap while being sat on — they still move to the right if they answer YES. Just move carefully so as to avoid dumping anyone on the floor.

Suzanne Haman
Shelburne Community School
Shelburne, VT

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Tell us what you think!

Authentic Assessment is the new buzzword in education, but recent research and conference discussions indicate that many teachers don't understand the new testing strategies. Tell us, in 100 words or less, how you or your staff overcame emotional and bureaucratic barriers to developing more accurate and meaningful measures of student achievement. We'll print some of your thoughts in a future issue of *Middle Ground*.

MG FAXBACK

FAX 502-899-1961, or call NMSA's Info Line 1-800-528-NMSA

Simply fill in, copy, and FAXBACK, or call in your viewpoint.

Share your assessment strategies...

Name

School

Position

Address

City

State

Zip

TEL

FAX

MegaphoneE!

Amusing, interesting and provocative comments from the field of middle-level education

"...It is our experience that most middle schools either have no goals, or they have goals that have little to do with student achievement. In many middle schools, it seems most of the conversation and energy among adults is about the psycho-emotional and health needs of young adolescents, student behavior, safety, scheduling and the lack of family and community support...No school can or should ignore these problems, but many middle schools allow them to define the mission of the school. In combination, these issues become a kind of swirling black hole that sucks the academic focus, time and energy out of the schools."

— Hayes Mizell, director of the Program for Student Achievement at the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, speaking at a conference on using assessment to guide middle school reform, Chestnut Hill, MA, Aug. 1994.

"Our goal was to determine the degree to which federal policy is appropriately sensitive to age differences within the general youth population and to explore strategies the federal government might use to improve its reach. Our findings, frankly, were shocking: of 188 federal youth programs studied — crossing at least a half dozen different agencies — only two target early adolescents. Popular assumptions to the contrary, middle children are not getting their fair share of federal dollars."

— Andrew B. Hahn, writing in "America's Middle Child: Making Age Count in the Development of a National Youth Policy," Center for Human Resources, Brandeis University, Waltham, MA, Jan., 1995.

"It's a lot easier to be a teacher of 150 middle school students or a principal of 1,000 than it is to be a parent of one."

— Frank Till, deputy superintendent, San Diego City Schools, speaking at the Education Writers Association's conference, "Educating Adolescents in the Age of Reform," San Diego, Feb., 1995.

"I don't see how we can talk about the empowerment of teachers without recognizing all the indignities they endure...America has a love affair with education, but does not hold teachers in the same revere."

— Ernest Boyer, president of the Carnegie Foundation, speaking at the NMSA national conference, Cincinnati, Nov., 1994.

"I think the biggest revolution of what can occur in education is happening in middle schools. It takes being able to confront your own adolescence to teach in middle school."

— Catherine Neale Watson, humanities teacher, Kroc Middle School in San Diego, speaking at the Education Writers Association's conference, "Educating Adolescents in the Age of Reform," San Diego, Feb., 1995.

"I'm really tired of those educators, particularly those who deal with middle school kids...who excuse them because they are poor, black, brown, latch-key. There are no excuses. Poverty is no excuse for profanity, for tardiness, for lack of courtesy, for children not coming in and saying, 'Teach me. Help me'...School has nothing to do with size. It has to do with the size of the minds of the people in front of kids."

— Lorraine Monroe, principal of Frederick Douglass Academy in New York City, speaking at the Reform Connection, an interactive conference sponsored by the Southern Regional Council and the Clark Foundation, Cincinnati, Nov., 1994.

"One of the things we haven't talked much about in middle school is achievement. It's no longer good enough for us to let them feel good about themselves not achieving."

— J. Howard Johnston, professor and chairman of secondary education, University of South Florida, speaking at the NMSA national conference, Cincinnati, Nov., 1994.

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MIDDLE GROUND

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"The Inspiration of Children"

Middle Schools Answer the Call for Service Learning

By Holly Holland

Five years ago, a Baltimore philanthropist wanted to support service learning in schools, so he invited some school service coordinators from the area to lunch. The coordinators were so excited to meet each other that they began gathering regularly to share ideas.

What projects are good for sixth-graders, some wanted to know. How do you locate public agencies that are willing to work with middle school students, some asked. What resources are available on computer databases, others wondered.

"We really needed each other," said Linda Anderson, a teacher, administrator and community service coordinator at The Potomac School in McLean, VA. "One of the difficult things for community service coordinators is that they're separate. They operate in a vacuum."

To end the isolation and spread service learning to schools around the country, the Council for Religion in Independent Schools in Bethesda, MD, hired Anderson three years ago to run the National Community Service Network, which provides resources and publishes a bimonthly newsletter for school service coordinators nationwide.

Requests for information have soared, Anderson said, indicating the intense interest in the field. Last March, about 1,300 educators attended the National Service Learning Conference in Philadelphia, sponsored by the National Youth Leadership Council. Several states and several hundred school districts have adopted service requirements for students. And a growing number of national organizations are dancing to the increasing demand for curriculum, training and resources for service learning in schools. **COVER STORY continued on p. 4**

Cover & page 4: Students at the Community Service Academy at Intermediate School 218 in New York City volunteer in homeless shelters, nursing homes and preschools.

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Bulletin Board

News and happenings in middle level education

WARNING
TEACHING CAN BE TOXIC

Education reformers have been trying for years to get teachers to dump their ditto sheets in the trash. Now there's another reason to pitch the purple paper — they may be hazardous to your health.

The American Federation of Teachers (AFT), responding to complaints from members around the country, found that the fluid used in old-fashioned ditto machines may contain methanol in toxic concentrations. Although the Occupational Safety and Health Administration does not have jurisdiction in public schools, its standards recommend limiting the maximum exposure level of methanol to 200 parts per million averaged over an eight-hour day and 250 parts per million in 15 minutes. A national survey of teachers and support staff in Everett, WA, several years ago found that they were exposed to concentrations of methanol ranging from 365 to 3,080 parts per million.

"Teachers and school staff who routinely duplicate materials on ditto machines may be at risk of overexposure to methanol during the printing process and after, during the sheets' 'off gassing' period, which may take up to 24 hours," said Darryl Alexander, AFT's workplace health and safety director.

Methanol can be inhaled and absorbed through the skin. Overexposure can lead to blurred vision, headaches, nausea and can cause miscarriages and birth defects in fetuses.

The AFT recommends that schools use non-toxic duplicator fluids instead of methanol-based fluids, keep pregnant women away from the machines and place the ditto machines in well-ventilated areas.

Support for Science and Math Reform

Schools and school districts that are trying to restructure their math and science programs can find resources and support through a free computer database. The Annenberg/CPB Math and Science Project has compiled information on projects, organizations and conferences involved in K-12 math and science reform nationwide. The third edition of "The Guide to Math and Science Reform" contains more than 500 entries.

"Our goal...is to provide a single, comprehensive resource on reform efforts," and help people involved in reform find each other more easily, said Scott Roberts, director of the project.

The guide provides concise abstracts for each reform effort including content, focus, target audience and current status. The software is compatible with either Macintosh or MS-DOS/Windows systems.

To obtain a free copy of the database, write to the Annenberg/CPB Math and Science Project, P.O. Box 2345, South Burlington, VT 05407-2345, or call 800-965-7373.

Middle School Science Materials Wanted

The National Science Resources Center in Washington, DC, is working on a guide to middle school science resources that will build on "Science for Children: Resources for Teachers," the center's annotated elementary school guide.

The middle school project, which is sponsored by the Merck Institute for Science Education, seeks information about curriculum materials and resources from public and private organizations. If you know of something that you believe should be included in the guide, please contact Evelyn Ernst, National Science Resources Center, 600 Maryland Ave., S.W., Suite 880, Washington, DC 20024. Internet address: eernst@nas.edu.

Middle Ground is published periodically by National Middle School Association, 2600 Corporate Exchange Drive, Suite 370, Columbus, OH 43231-1672. Editorial offices are at 4004 Alton Road, Louisville, KY 40207, TEL 502-899-1924, FAX 502-899-1961. **Middle Ground** is a benefit included in all levels of NMSA membership. Copyright © 1995 by NMSA. All rights reserved.

Sue Swaim, Executive Director
Holly Holland, Editor
April Tibbles, Production Manager
Katie Sullivan, Designer

HIP HAPPENINGS
FOR DEAF STUDENTS

With his blue body suit, rippling chest muscles and flowing red cape, he looks like... a bird...a plane...Superman? No, this comic strip super hero goes by another name — Deaf Defender. And his faithful companion is a dog named Hear-O.

Created by Daniel Gladstone, a sixth-grader at the Sierra School in El Cerrito, CA, Deaf Defender is a regular feature in *HiP*, a new bimonthly magazine created especially for deaf and hard-of-hearing students. *HiP* is a full-color, tabloid-size publication designed for adolescents

8 to 14 years old. Friends Robin Gladstone and Ellen Dolich started the magazine last October to honor the achievements and potential of hearing-impaired people, including their two children.

"Our kids are very open and interested in regular magazines and publications. My son likes the newspaper and *Sports Illustrated*," Gladstone said. "But there's really no other place where kids who are deaf and hard of hearing can read specifically about people like themselves, who've experienced what they have and who can offer tips that they don't include in the regular media."

Recent issues of *HiP* featured a profile of a deaf professional race car driver, a story about a gorilla who uses sign language and suggestions for successful sleep-overs (don't forget a flashlight with extra batteries so you can talk in the dark.) Each issue includes reviews of deaf-assisted products, puzzles, games and plenty of articles and art work by students. The magazine also includes HiP TiPs, a pull-out teaching guide for professionals and parents.

Annual subscriptions are $14.95, less for multiple orders. For more information contact *HiP* Magazine, 1563 Solano Ave., #137, Berkeley, CA 94707. TEL: 510-527-8993.

RESOURCES

(CRIS) National Community Service Network, 4405 E.-W. Highway, Suite 506, Bethesda, MD 20814. Linda Anderson, coordinator. TEL: 703-749-6395.

Community Service Academy, Intermediate School 218, 4600 Broadway, New York, NY 10040. TEL: 212-567-2589. Mark Kavarsky, principal; Lydia Bassett, assistant principal.

Samuel Totten and Jon Pederson, Center for Middle Level Education, Research and Development, University of Arkansas, 108 Peabody Hall, Fayetteville, AK 72701. TEL: 501-575-7244.

National Youth Leadership Council, 1910 W. County Road B, St. Paul, MN 55113. TEL: 612-631-3672. Wokie Roberts-Weah, director of national programs. Supports six regional centers. Publishes curriculum guides and other materials.

National Service Learning Cooperative Clearinghouse. Run by the National Youth Leadership Council and the University of Minnesota. TEL: 800-808-SERVE. e-mail: serve@maroon.tc.umn.edu.

Corporation for National Service, 1201 New York Ave., N.W., Washington, DC 20525. TEL: 202-606-5000. Ruby Anderson, national program director, ext. 115. Set up by the federal government to support service projects.

National Helpers Network (formerly the National Center for Service Learning in Early Adolescence), 245 5th Ave., Suite 1705, New York, NY 10016-8728. TEL: 212-679-2482 or 800-646-4623. Alice Halsted, president. Provides training, materials and technical assistance for service learning at the middle level.

Maryland Student Service Alliance. 200 W. Baltimore St., Baltimore, MD 21201. TEL: 410-333-2427. Publishes classroom activities and background materials for community service programs.

Youth Service America, 1101 15th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20005. TEL: 202-296-2992. Resources include a handbook that describes major public and private service organizations and school service programs.

National Society for Experiential Education, 3509 Haworth Drive, Suite 207, Raleigh, NC, 27609-7229. TEL: 919-787-3263.

The Kid's Guide to Service Projects, by Barbara A. Lewis, Free Spirit Publishing, 1995, ISBN 0-915793-82-2, 175 pages, $10.95.

"If there's anything that can help improve a community, it's a child growing up in it. You want to give back to the communities the inspiration of their children."

Indeed, it seems that service learning has finally come of age nationwide. Instead of showing sporadic interest in humanitarianism, more and more schools are developing thoughtful, on-going plans for broadening students' roles in their communities through service.

Service learning fits in with many popular school reform initiatives, including experiential education. But it also builds on traditional values such as the importance of character education and civic responsibility. At the middle school level, students are volunteering as tutors in preschools, aides in nursing homes and servers in soup kitchens. They're teaching Spanish to police officers, setting up wildlife habitats and verifying that public buildings are accessible to handicapped persons.

Many schools have used Learn and Serve America grants from the Corporation for National Service to bolster student volunteer projects. At Greenville Middle School in Greenville, AL, for example, about 175 students participate in the five-year-old Builders Club, whose projects have included tutoring children and clearing a five-acre nature trail. Students choose their own projects and run their own meetings. The club received a $5,150 grant from Alabama Learn and Serve and other assistance from the Greenville Kiwanis Club.

"We want this to become part of lifelong learning," said Judy Manning, community education coordinator for the Butler County (AL) Public Schools.

In many cases, however, enthusiasm for service learning has preceded an understanding of its challenges and opportunities.

"A lot of people are doing service learning and their hearts are in the right places," said Samuel Totten, associate professor of middle-level and secondary education at the University of Arkansas and director of the Center for Middle Level Education, Research and Development. "But they send kids out to clean up a park or a playground, and the kids don't have any idea of what it's about other than (that) they're having a good time."

Totten, who co-edited a new book, *Social Issues and Service at the Middle Level*, with Jon E. Pederson, found that few middle schools have given serious thought to the role that service learning plays in the overall mission of the school. Few have tied service projects to the curriculum, he said, so that students can make connections between their volunteer efforts and academics. Fewer still have developed interdisciplinary lessons that complement students' volunteer activities.

"There's a big difference between community service and service learning," Totten said.

"Community service is simply going out in the community and doing a project...A key component of service learning is that it's tied to the community and curriculum. And it should involve some reflective practice — writing in your journal for instance, or discussing what you've done and the effect on you or someone else."

At many schools, service learning still is considered an add-on requirement that teachers or other staff members have to coordinate on top of their regular, full-time work. Linda Anderson said many schools also try to tackle multiple projects at the same time, leaving everyone feeling overworked and confused about their purpose.

"Some of the finest service programs I've seen are those that believe that less is more," Anderson said. "Don't do a lot of things, but do them well. Know your agency, know your kids and spend time with reflection."

Most schools seem to go through developmental stages with service learning, said Wokie Roberts-Weah, director of national programs for the National Youth Leadership Council in St. Paul, MN, a non-profit organization that was founded in 1983 to encourage youth service and leadership. Schools tend to start with one-shot projects, she said, then, with additional training, discover ways to develop

stronger, long-term programs that benefit students and their communities.

At North East Middle School in Minneapolis, for example, an ethnically mixed group of students from one part of town was bused to a school in a predominantly white, blue-collar neighborhood. Roberts-Weah said the North East students raised money to build "The Gathering Place," an amphitheater and park near the school that has brought both groups together and reduced their mutual mistrust.

At Kammerer Middle School in Louisville, KY, a team of sixth-grade teachers decided to reduce their service project offerings after the first year.

"We found that a totally broad, open-ended service program was too much," said Marianne Wunderlin, who was hired by the school to coordinate service learning two days a week. "Last year, we went in all different directions."

This past school year, teachers worked to tie the service projects into the curriculum. One group of Kammerer sixth-graders regularly visited residents of a nearby nursing home; they plan to continue the visits throughout middle school. The students read and wrote about intergenerational relationships, spoke to geriatrics specialists and studied the human body's aging process. They also simulated the physical problems that many elderly people have — smearing vaseline on their glasses to experience visual distortions, for example, and taping their hands and fingers together to understand the effects of arthritis.

Student Quinn Stoner said he learned a great deal through his relationship with "Mr. Earl," a resident of the nursing home.

"Little kids usually think the only people they can have fun with is someone their own age," Quinn said.

Such examples illustrate the powerful impact of service learning on personal relationships and self-esteem, Roberts-Weah said. But she acknowledged that such stories don't address complaints about the lack of research on service learning and student achievement. More quantitative research is needed, she said.

Proponents of service learning believe that early adolescence, when youngsters make the transition from childhood to the teenage years, is a great time to help students gain a sense of belonging to a larger community. That's the vision behind the Community Service Academy, which opened in 1992 as one of five academies within Intermediate School 218 in New York City.

The Community Service Academy uses its advisory period — scheduled in block periods several hours each week — to coordinate ongoing service projects, with one teacher supervising about 15 students. Assistant principal Lydia Bassett said each project relates to the curriculum and supports one of the academy's major goals: to demonstrate that young people can be effective advocates for change in their communities.

For example, some sixth-graders at the school teach Spanish language and Dominican culture to local police officers; the project improves the students' communication skills and repairs the traditionally poor relationship between law enforcement officers and Dominican immigrants. Some sixth-graders run a preschool program for neighborhood children that has involved designing a new playground (where they use math and architecture skills), planning lunch menus (nutrition and health) and building a curriculum (reading and math). Other students learn about biology and botany while devising ways to prevent soil erosion in a local park.

Bassett said an added benefit of a well-designed service learning program is a reduction in the traditional "antagonism" between educators and the community.

"A lot of times," she said, "teachers see schools as an oasis from the community, and the community sees schools as failing the children. With service learning, what you say to students is that one of the important things is to interact with the community, and schools can help you address the problems you face.

"If there's anything that can help improve a community, it's a child growing up in it. You want to give back to the communities the inspiration of their children."

Holly Holland is editor of Middle Ground.

"There's a big difference between community service and service learning..."

Students at Kammerer Middle School in Louisville, KY, perform clown skits for their service partners at a local nursing home.

"My Name by Any Other Name is NOT My Self"

By Dr. Phoebe B. Speck

A short while ago, I moved back to the New York City area and remembered what it felt like to be a young adolescent in a world of adult authorities. Why? Because I had moved from another state and needed to get a new driver's license.

As I sat in the green vinyl chairs in the Bureau of Motor Vehicles office, my stomach churned.

"Why are you so anxious?" I asked myself.

After all, I had been driving a car for more than 30 years. I had completed a doctorate in education. And I could recite all the facts from the driver's manual from tire-tread size to road kills.

My anxiety did not relate to test-taking, however. I was scared of repeating what I call the "name-negating syndrome." It's a malady that afflicts those who are unaware of how important our names are to our self-esteem — particularly to students in multicultural, middle school classrooms.

I sat in that office like a middle-school student at orientation, filling out forms by the dozens and visibly cringing when I heard this announcement: "As I call your name, please step forward. I apologize in advance for any mispronouncements of your names."

Suddenly I was reliving my first day in junior high school. I had arrived with the wrong clothes, the wrong body and the wrong name. My teachers stood in front of the room, their clipboards and forms at the ready. They gave little indication that they believed in the virtue of building self-esteem in young adolescents. Clearly, pronouncing my name correctly was not high on their list of priorities that day.

My name, Phoebe Bozonelis, had passed through many generations of Greek families. My godfather had chosen my first name from the Greek goddess who protected the Delphic oracle; it means "bright one."

Noble heritage or not, I hated my name and the anxiety it caused me. I cringed every time my name had to be called as part of the roll, on the loud speaker or in the auditorium: "Is Beebee Bonzolla here?" "Fobby Boozealous, please raise your hand." "This week's team leader is Phofy Bozoneli." "Hey, Bozo, you're up next."

Being typical adolescents, my peers quickly jumped on the "Bozo Bandwagon." I wanted to

die from embarrassment. My cheeks burned with shame as I listened to my peers giggling at my expense. Although I could not articulate my humilation, I reasoned that the adults in authority were attacking my identity, my heritage, my meness. I tried to excuse their thoughtlessness by assuming that they were just ignorant, but I knew better.

Today, when I work with middle-school students, I often ask them: "What is the worst thing that could happen to you in school?" In response, they rarely talk about getting bad grades or being suspended. Instead, the most frequent reply is, "Being embarrassed in front of my friends."

Some educators may not recognize the importance of self-concept to middle school students. They may believe that paying attention to students' feelings is less critical than managing a classroom or a school. In the big picture, what does it matter that a few names are mispronounced? In a word, plenty. Words have power, and the misuse of that power can hurt. Whoever said "sticks and stones may break my bones, but words can never hurt me" obviously never had a name that had to be spelled and sounded out to peers, teachers or license bureau clerks.

Back at the license bureau, I waited anxiously for my name to be called. I didn't remember that my last name was now the more pronounceable Speck and that I had graduated into adulthood. I felt like an adolescent all over again as the adult with the clipboard came toward me:

"Will Fifi Spock please step up to the counter?"

Dr. Phoebe Speck is a professor of education in the graduate school at the Bank Street College of Education, New York, NY.

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Your Advisory Program Is A Snap

By Jim Burns

Teacher advisory is the most underinvested program in middle school. Sometimes poor planning and implementation are at fault, but more often good programs just need a thorough tuneup.

If your advisory program is stalling, consider these repair strategies:

- **Use a half day of staff development time and another half day of release time for the planning group. Spend about 30 minutes identifying the program's strengths, then list the most serious problems. (If possible, use the results of a quick survey given at a preceding faculty meeting.) Don't be discouraged if the list is negative. A good diagnosis requires candid information. Sort the concerns into general categories such as Background / Orientation needs, Personal Boundary Issues and Content.**
- **Design a menu of six to eight 45-minute sessions about successful strategies for dealing with the identified issues. Suggested topics: "Teacher Advisory: Why, What and How;" "New Games;" "Healthy Boundaries and Happy Advisors;" and "Spirit Building."**
- **You won't need to hire outside experts. Identify people in your school, district or community to lead the sessions. A counselor is a natural choice to lead a session on boundary issues, for example. Be specific about what you hope to learn in each session.**
- **Schedule a half day to follow a staff lunch, with noon dismissal for students. Give a five-minute overview, then allow your presenters to describe their sessions in less than a minute each. Let each staff member choose three sessions, which will be repeated throughout the day.**
- **Ask teachers to complete a quick evaluation of each session.**

This low-cost tuneup is easy and effective. It can become an annual event that will improve with time as "crowd-pleasers" return and new talents take the stage. In the end, students [illegible]

Monday Morning

Practical ideas and strategies from the experiential files of middle school teachers.

Wisconsin Teacher Gives Students Wings to Explore Bird Land

Animal adaptations can be a dull topic if limited to the explanation in a typical science textbook. But when you add fine arts, language arts and technology, you've got a recipe for an interdisciplinary unit that's definitely not for the birds.

Several years ago, Robert A. Ambas designed an award-winning interdisciplinary lesson on birds for his sixth-grade students at Weyauwega-Fremont Middle School in Weyauwega, WI. During the two-month project, students first studied the shape of bird beaks to find out how function follows structure. They discovered, for example, that a Great Blue Heron's long, pointed beak enables it to spear fish at fast speeds and a woodpecker's hard, pointed beak enables it to penetrate the cracks in tree bark.

Ambas' students next used computer paint programs to design bird beaks. With help from art teacher Julie Hendricks, the students worked in teams to construct bird masks from plaster cast, gauze and wire. Other students inspected the masks for scientific accuracy.

In language arts class, the students wrote plays about birds, interviewed the birds about their beak adaptations and filmed all the performances with a video camera. Ambas then helped his students edit the videos, including adding computer graphics.

[illegible] and the McGraw-Hill School Publishing Co. honored Ambas three years ago with its annual award for instructional innovation, one of 10 national awards given that year for math and science instruction that can be adopted for use by other teachers.

It's really important to have time for interdisciplinary units, Ambas said. It's labor- and time-intensive. You need administrative support for scheduling. But the rewards are good. When you see a student here and there — and sometimes several — with sparks in their eyes ... it makes it worth it.

PEACEFUL RESOLUTIONS

Louisville Teacher Uses Behavior Contract to Curb Discipline Problems

Nine years ago, when Laurie Chumley began teaching literature at Johnson Traditional Middle School in Louisville, KY, she quickly realized that her experience in suburban schools hadn't prepared her for the tough discipline problems in an urban classroom. Confronting or yelling at a student almost always escalated to a conflict — both teacher and student responded with anger.

Chumley attended workshops on student discipline, but thought the strategies were too punitive and confrontational. Then she started watching other teachers who had good rapport with students. Almost all relied on non-threatening interventions, she said.

"Middle school kids are so vulnerable," Chumley said. "Anything and everything can make these kids erupt. Anything you can do to be a calming influence helps."

Chumley decided to adopt a different approach to discipline, one that teaches students to solve problems, instead of just punishing them for disobeying rules. At the beginning of each school year, Chumley explains her discipline policy and asks students to role-play various situations — chewing gum, talking out in class and other common problems — so they'll understand what's appropriate behavior, and what's not.

If students later act inappropriately, Chumley talks to them privately.

"I'll pull a chair up and show them where I documented what they did," she said. "Then I always ask them, 'What's the problem? What can you do differently to correct that behavior?' The kid may say, 'I really don't like this book,' or 'My parents got in a fight last night.' So now I have a handle on it."

If students continue to misbehave, Chumley has them prepare behavior contracts that include written descriptions of the problems, the students' solutions and their parents' signatures. For the few students who violate their behavior contracts, Chumley asks them to re-examine the contracts in meetings with their parents. Chumley also tries to catch students behaving well in class, then follows up with a positive message to their parents.

"I feel it gives kids ownership," Chumley said. "This age needs a lot of trial and error...Nothing is perfect, but this really works great."

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Target

The Newsletter of National Middle School As[illegible] 1995

NMSA Unveils New Logo

The Board of Trustees approved a new association logo at its June1995 meeting. Following a year of discussion, planning, and designs, board members concurred with the recommendation of the logo steering committee. This group, composed of Board and Headquarters members, worked to develop a logo that visually communicated the purpose and mission of the association.

Cary Bell, Trustee to Represent Diverse Cultures and a Logo Steering Committee member, shared the following reactions to the new logo: "I am very enthusiastic about NMSA's new logo. For me it captures symbolically a great deal of the vigor, vitality and diversity of the middle school movement as we head into the 21st century. I was impressed with the creative and completely thorough process NMSA staff used to gather ideas about our association, what we value and believe, and then translated these into a logo design. I shared some of the final design possibilities with my group of eighth-grade advisees in Shoreham Wading River Middle School. Independently of one another, but unanimously, they chose from among the various options the tree logo NMSA is now unveiling. In expressing their preferences, like most 14-year-olds, my advisees had a lot to say including how it was 'fun to pick out the different kids' faces in the tree branches,' or how the tree could stand for 'life and growing up', and on the strength of the tree which 'looks strong enough to stand up to any winds that might blow through its branches'."

NMSA

Upon seeing the new NMSA logo, John Lounsbury, Chair of NMSA's Publication Committee and Monographs Editor stated, " In today's society, with its information overload, it becomes increasingly important to have a distinctive visual image tied to an institution or organization. An acronym alone is no longer sufficient to ensure quick recognition of the source of communication. Now NMSA has an attractive logo that both identifies us and symbolizes our mission."

The new logo will appear on all NMSA material beginning this fall. NMSA graphic designer, Katie Sullivan, and production manager, April Tibbles played key roles in developing the logo. Their leadership has helped NMSA take another important step forward as it increases its influence in the education arena.

Theme for 1996 Middle Level Education Month Announced—

National Middle Level Education Month, co-sponsored by National Middle School Association and National Association of Secondary School Principals, proudly announces the March, 1996 theme *Making a Difference in the Middle: The World of Tomorrow in the Hands of Today*. This theme is especially appropriate as we prepare to enter the 21st century and look forward to today's middle level students entering the adult work force. They will be our future decision makers in less than 10 years. Part of this year's theme, *The World of Tomorrow in the Hands of Today*, was developed by a Wisconsin middle level student for Wisconsin's 1995 Affiliate conference. We appreciate the affiliate's willingness to help us add a middle level student's voice to the celebration.

Making a Difference in the Middle: The World of Tommorow in the Hands of Today

Media kits will be sent to all NMSA institutional members this fall. Individual members may request a kit in September by calling NMSA Headquarters at 1-800-528 NMSA (6672). These packets will include a wide variety of ideas and support material plus a special poster to help schools celebrate Middle Level Education Month.

News&Notes

EDITOR NAMED: Tom Erb, University of Kansas curriculum and instruction professor, has been named the new editor of NMSA's flagship publication *Middle School Journal*. Erb has served as interim editor for the past year and assumed permanent editorship in June. He brings a wealth of middle level knowledge, writing, and editing experience to this position.

SECRETARY RILEY VISITS COLUMBUS: NMSA collaborated with the U.S. Department of Education and the Columbus, Ohio Public Schools to arrange a middle school visit for Secretary of Education, Richard Riley while he was in town to deliver a keynote speech to the Ohio PTA State Conference. At Secretary Riley's request, Sue Swaim, NMSA Executive Director joined him for the school tour which focused on classroom visitations and parent involvement programs. Secretary Riley, introduced by Mrs. Swaim at his press conference, answered questions regarding school funding, Goals 2000, parent involvement programs, and the importance of partnerships between local, state and federal education agencies.

INTERNATIONAL FILM AND VIDEO FESTIVAL
AWARD WINNER

VIDEO RECEIVES AWARD: NMSA's video, "Sexual Harassment: It's Hurting People," received the Gold Camera Award in the social issues category at the recent 23th Annual International Film and Video Festival. The Gold Camera Award is the highest honor awarded at the festival and is not automatically presented every year, but is awarded only when a video meets the highest criteria for recognition. The video, co-produced by NMSA and Quality Work Environments, was selected from a field of over 1,500 videos from 27 different nations.

NMSA JOINS CEF: NMSA has recently become a member of the Committee for Education Funding (CEF). The decision to join this coalition reflects NMSA's effort to boost its visibility in Washington, D.C. and monitor legislation. CEF is a coalition of more than 80 major education associations representing a broad spectrum of the education community. Its primary goal is maintaining and advancing the federal investment in education. The following comment appeared in a recent *CEF Update*: "Every dollar for education counts toward expanding vital educational opportunities for Americans and preparing them to meet the demands of the 21st century economy. Congress must continue its traditional bipartisan support for funding levels that expand access to quality education for all."

NMSA

NMSA/NCATE GUIDELINES APPROVED: The Board of Trustees recently approved the final draft of the NMSA/NCATE guidelines written and presented by NMSA's Professional Preparation and Certification Committee. These guidelines will now be submitted to the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education for their review and endorsement. Once this has been completed, these guidelines will be the official standards for NCATE accredited middle level teacher education programs. This document will also help states revise and develop middle school licensing standards and be useful to colleges and universities as they develop middle level teacher education programs. A copy of the revised guidelines will be available from NMSA in late September.

***Target* is published periodically by National Middle School Association.**

Sue Swaim, Executive Director, Editor
April Tibbles, Production Manager
Katie Sullivan, Graphic Designer
Cassandra Bonner, Editorial Assistant

What's Happening in Washington?

Congress has recently discussed awarding federal block grants to education. The idea of block grants is not new. This approach to federal assistance was tried in the early 1970s and 1980s. In both instances, the amount of actual federal aid to education declined according to data obtained from the Children's Defense Fund and the Congressional Research Service.

It's important for educators to understand now, perhaps more than ever before, the reasoning behind and the potential impact of new federal initiatives such as block grant proposals. New resources to help educators ask and find answers to important questions about these issues are now available from the Center on National Education Policy. For example the following questions are important ones to ask regarding block grant proposals.

1. Will the block grant help children learn better?
2. What is the purpose of the block grant—an educational one: to increase student achievement; or an administrative one: to reduce the paperwork burden—or is the purpose to cut back funding to find revenues to finance some other priority?
3. Is the block grant a means of phasing out federal aid for education or will the aggregate level of funding of the individual programs be maintained?
4. Will the block grant be so structured that the funds will flow to the local level where they will help children?
5. What will the states be able to do under a block grant program that they are unable to do now? Will the block grant ensure that the intended beneficiaries of the current programs receive services?
6. Instead of block grants, can the objectives of simplifying programs, reducing expenditures, and allowing for flexibility be accomplished by terminating and consolidating programs and expanding authority for waiving federal rules and regulations?

"It's important for educators to understand now, perhaps more than ever before the reasoning behind and potential impact of new federal initiatives such as block grant proposals."

The Center on National Education Policy, which is co-sponsored by Phi Delta Kappa and the Institute for Educational Leadership, is located at: 1001 Connecticut Avenue, Suite 310, Washington, D.C. 20036, TEL 202-822-8065. The Center recently developed four information bulletins on specific federal education issues: *Raising Student Achievement: Federal, State and Local Partnerships; Block Grants and Education; Education and the Contract With America*; and *Should There Be a U.S. Department of Education?* These are written in clear, concise language and strive to address the pros and cons of each issue. They are clearly a valuable resource for educators who are trying to understand the federal education debate. A copy of each bulletin is available from NMSA (1-800-528-NMSA).

NMSA Online Seminar Calendar Announced

As part of NMSA's online telecommunications service for middle level educators, a series of Online Seminars has been scheduled featuring experts in middle level education. To participate in NMSA discussions, which lead up to the monthly live seminars, go to NMSA Online in Scholastic Network's Professional Development (Keyword: SN NMSA) and select "Middle School Discussion" from the list of topics; then select the topic that interests you.

TEACHING PEACE, Dr. Lorraine Morgan, Educational Consultant specializing in teaching tolerance. Discussion area will be open July 28th. Live Chat: September 28th, 8:00-9:00 PM, EDT.

TEAMING IN THE MIDDLE SCHOOL, Dr. Tom Erb, Editor of Middle School Journal. Discussion area will be open on September 29th. Live Chat: October 26th, 8:00-9:00 PM, EST.

MULTI-CULTURAL ISSUES, Dr. M. Lee Manning, author of "Celebrating Diversity: Multi-cultural Education in Middle Level Schools." Discussion area will open on October 27th. Live Chat: December 7th, 8:00-9:00 PM, EST.

INTEGRATING CURRICULUM, Dr. Chris Stevenson, author of "Integrated Studies in the Middle Grades: Dancing Through Walls." Discussion will be open on December 8th. Live Chat: January 24th, 8:00-9:00 PM, EST.

Resolutions Accepted by NMSA Board of Trustees

Two resolutions presented at the 1994 Annual Conference in Cincinnati were accepted by the NMSA Board of Trustees and have become official resolutions of the association. They are the following:

> Whereas, young adolescents must be prepared to participate actively and productively in community life; and, Whereas, productive engaged citizenship leads to the enhancement of our social systems and our society at-large; and, Whereas early adolescence is a developmentally appropriate time to enhance service learning:
>
> Therefore, be it resolved that NMSA should encourage middle level schools and agencies at all levels to provide incentives that will promote the development of service learning for young adolescents.

> Whereas, the middle school's mission is to meet the needs of all young adolescents; and, Whereas, not all students have sufficient reading skills to ensure attaining their full academic and employment potential; and, Whereas, voluntary reading often decreases as students move from grade to grade; and, Whereas successful citizens are those who read;
>
> Therefore, be it resolved that NMSA provide information for improving school policies on instruction and recommend that middle level schools implement integrated curriculum models which emphasize reading; and be it further resolved, that NMSA encourage middle level schools to make reading a priority concern and develop strategies that help students read successfully and develop an intrinsic love of reading.

NMSA encourages its members to consider these two resolutions and their importance in the ongoing development of their school's curriculum.

Following acceptance by the Board of Trustees, the Curriculum Study Group was asked to review these resolutions and look for ways the association could address these issues. In a report at the June 1995 board meeting the study group cited examples of recent and continuing support, including, but not limited to, various articles in *Middle School Journal*, *Middle Ground* and *High Strides*; concurrent sessions and assemblies at the NMSA annual conference; and weekend workshops on middle level literacy and service learning scheduled as part of the 1995-96 professional development program. NMSA encourages its members to consider these two resolutions and their importance in the ongoing development of their school's curriculum.

Longview Foundation Global Education Grant Applications Available

Seven National Middle School Association member schools will be awarded $500 Global Education Grants for proposals illustrating innovative instructional strategies that improve young adolescents' understanding of the interdependent global community. The Mini-Grant Program, sponsored by the Longview Foundation and administered by NMSA, was developed in 1991 to provide seed funds to schools whose projects incorporated middle level philosophy, including interdisciplinary instruction and integrated curricula.

Application guidelines require that proposals contain and define a global/international perspective. The Longview Foundation describes global education as learning about the problems and issues that cut across national boundaries and recognizing the interconnectedness of ecological, cultural, economic, political, and technological systems. International education is the process that provides cross-cultural knowledge of the world community through a study of resources such as places, people, events, values, artifacts, problems, and issues. The goal is to understand ourselves and our interdependence with other peoples of the world.

Grant proposals will be evaluated on originality, creativity and innovation, appropriateness to young adolescent students, topic and content relevance to the world situation, and appropriate use of grant funds.

Applications may be obtained by calling NMSA Headquarters, 1-800-528-6672. The deadline for applications is Monday, November 6, 1995. Please contact Diana Marcil at NMSA for further information.

Deadline for applications is Monday, November 6, 1995.

Orlando Students Travel the World by Computer

POWER in the middle

Teachers and students making powerful progress in the classroom

Four years ago, when Caroline McCullen started using online computer research with her students, she had to drag a telephone line 50 feet down the hall from the teachers' lounge to her classroom. She pestered officials in the Orlando (FL) Public School District for the next three years until she got five telephone lines installed in her classroom.

"I was determined this was going to happen," said McCullen, who teaches an elective telecommunications course at Discovery Middle School in Orlando.

Her goal was simple: to help students tap into the vast resources on the Internet, a global computer network.

"It has changed everything about the way I teach," McCullen said. "There's a wealth of information on the Internet. My goal is to make sense of it."

McCullen and her students have had an inexpensive tour of the Internet thanks to a free hookup and support from nearby University of Central Florida. The only cost to Discovery is basic telephone service — $110 a month for five lines.

Initially, McCullen said, her students used e-mail to communicate with people around the world. They also retrieved free resources and project ideas from sites on the Internet such as Kidsphere and KidLink.

Last fall, McCullen and her students started publishing MidLink magazine on the World Wide Web, a collection of pages that offers a place for storing and displaying documents that are accessible on the Internet. Their bimonthly, graphical publication includes submissions from students and teachers around the world and lists web sites that are appropriate for middle school students.

Eighth-grader Rachel Rusch, who didn't even know what the Internet was a year ago, has created her own Homepage on hurricanes and completed several Hyperstudio drawings for MidLink magazine.

"I was able to put together a report which takes the reader directly to the sight where interesting information on hurricanes could be found," she wrote in an e-mail interview with *Middle Ground*. "For example, if you were to click on the highlighted word Hurricane Andrew, in the context of my report, it could take you to a sight on the Internet where you can view actual pictures of the hurricane."

One of MidLink's ongoing projects is spreading information from and about the Malcolm Baldridge, a U.S. research vessel that is sailing around the world to map the ocean floor and gather information about global warming and pollution. Capt. Craig Nelson, commanding officer of the ship, read about MidLink magazine in a National Science Foundation publication and began corresponding with Discovery Middle School students through e-mail.

Nelson said the students have been mostly interested in whales and porpoises. Among the questions he's received: "Why does the ship zigzag all over the place instead of going in a straight line from port to port? How do you record the amount of carbon dioxide in the water? Have you discovered any new fish?

The Malcolm Baldridge's adventures have seeped into multiple classes at Discovery. In language arts, students have written letters to Nelson and his crew. In science, they've studied mass, weight and volume as it relates to the ship's ocean explorations. In social studies, they've charted the ship's course on maps and studied the history and culture of various ports of call.

McCullen said the Internet projects have energized the staff at Orlando. Other teachers have written grants to buy more equipment and get additional training. And though McCullen plans to move to Raleigh, NC, later this year with her husband, she is confident that MidLink will live on.

Have computer, will travel.

For more information about MidLink, contact McCullen at 407-381-9970 or at http://longwood.cs.ucf.edu/~MidLink.

SNAPshots

Profiles and news about award-winning schools and teachers...

Question: What's the focus of a national award-winning, middle school geography project?

A: The impact of a devastated honeybee population on Michigan's agricultural production;
B: Solutions for revitalizing downtown Chandler, AZ;
C: How to maintain the Hohokam Indians petroglyphs (stone carvings) in Phoenix's South Mountain Preserve;
D: All of the above.

Answer: D.

All three themes produced winning projects in the middle-grades categories of the sixth annual American Express Geography Competition. Michael Roessler's seventh-grade students at Portland Middle School in Portland, MI, won the environmental competition for the second year in a row with a project about killer bees and bee killers. Leslie Porges' eighth-graders at Bogle Junior High School in Chandler, AZ, took first place in two categories — travel and trade and patterns of cultural diversity — with projects on urban revitalization and the preservation of Native American artifacts.

The first-place teams each received $7,500 and an all-expenses paid trip for several members to New York City. The winning teacher earned the trip and $1,000. About 3,000 students submitted 1,041 projects in the competition for students in grades six through 12.

Roessler and Porges — he in his 25th year of teaching and she in her fourth year — seem to have a lock on the competition. Their teams have placed at or near the top nearly every time they've entered.

"They are really remarkable teachers," said Harriet Glasgow, spokesperson for the American Express Geography Competition in New York. "They just produce the most phenomenal projects year after year."

Because the competition stresses problem-solving, not just memorization of facts, Glasgow said judges look for comprehensive projects that involve original research, practical solutions and strong writing.

Roessler's students, for example, spent six months studying the impact of the *tracheal* and *Varroa* mites on the honeybee population in Michigan and other states. They listened to guest speakers, surveyed beekeepers and talked to farmers about how the bee shortage was affecting crop pollination.

"People in this country think geography is memorizing the names of rivers and states and capes," Roessler said. "It's not. It's about change and people interacting with the earth. Once you've done these projects, you know that."

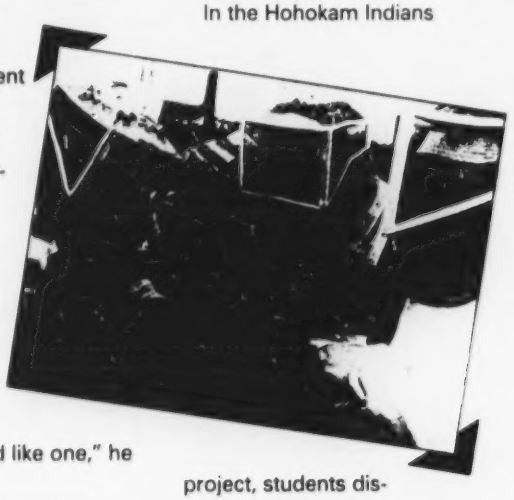
Portland student Anthony Kilmartin said he loved interviewing people for the bee project, which boosted his self-confidence.

"I'm an adult and can be treated like one," he said.

Porges said middle school students aren't accustomed to doing original research, which is why this competition is so challenging.

"Besides the content, they also learn how to do group work, how to do a comprehensive project, how to think and write well — the skills they will need in school and beyond," she said. "They learn that you do it over and over until it's right...Sometimes that drove them crazy."

The Chandler students spent four months on their projects. For the urban redevelopment effort, they consulted with experts in several fields, interviewed merchants in the downtown area and used a computer program to design land-use maps.



In the Hohokam Indians project, students discovered that weather erosion, vandalism and pollution threatened the 2,000 Hohokam images carved, scratched and chipped into rock surfaces near Phoenix. Believing that education was one of the best ways to prevent further damage, the students created a study unit for fourth- and fifth-grade students as part of their project.

AWARDS

Kathleen Niblett, an eighth-grader at Laguna Middle School in San Luis Obispo, CA, was the national winner of the Letters About Literature contest sponsored by Weekly Reader Corp.'s *Read* magazine and The Center for the Book at the Library of Congress. The contest, which attracted 10,000 entries, invited students in grades six through 10 to write a letter to an author describing how his or her book changed the students way of looking at the world. Kathleen won for her letter to Olympic champion Carl Lewis about his book, *Inside Track*.

Three middle school students were among six students who tied for first place in *Read* magazine's national Poetry Olympics, which attracted 6,000 entries. Sara Bright, an eighth-grader at Summersville Junior High School in Summersville, WV, received the award for her poem, "Make Believe;" Ilana Greenberg, an eighth-grader at R.A.S.G. Hebrew Academy in Miami Beach, FL, won for her poem, "Night;" and Amy Clark, an eighth-grader at Greely Junior High School in Cumberland Center, ME, won for her poem, "so there's this mountain."

Several middle-grades schools earned "Highest Award" status for their literary magazines in a competition sponsored by the National Council of Teachers of English. Among the winners: *The Write Stuff*, W.W. Jackson Middle School, San Antonio, TX; *Pearls and Diamonds*, Ben Franklin Middle School, Chantilly, VA; and *Pegasus*, The Walker School, Marietta, GA. July 1 is the deadline for submitting magazines to state leaders for the 1994-1995 contest, which considers magazines published between September 1994 and July 1995. For details, write to the Program to Recognize Excellence in Student Literary Magazines, NCTE, 1111 W. Kenyon Road, Urbana, IL 61801-1096.

Montello Junior High School in Montello, WI, has won the Bridge to Understanding Award from the United States Board on Books for Young People. The award, which carries a $500 cash prize, honors programs that promote reading as a way to expand a child's world.

The Montello Junior High School Reading Program, directed by Sandra Kowalczyk, featured "Book a Trip Around the World." Seventh- and eighth-grade students received unofficial passports that were stamped to document their reading travels. The students also kept journals and designed and wrote postcards describing the people they met and the places they visited in their literary adventures.

Applications for the 1996 award are available from the United States Board on Books for Young People Secretariat, 800 Barksdale Road, Newark, DE, 19714. The deadline for submissions is Dec. 1. The contest is open to schools, libraries, scout troops, clubs and bookstores that serve children from kindergarten through 10th grade.

GRANTS

The National Endowment for the Humanities Focus Grants offers money for small, quick-turnaround projects in which a group of teachers at any grade level studies an important humanities issue and incorporates that knowledge into the school curriculum. Grants may be used to pay for substitute teachers, books and materials and travel. Deadline: Sept. 15. TEL: 202-606-8377. To receive a copy of the 1995 "NEH Overview of Endowment Programs," write to NEH Overview, Rm. 402, 1100 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W., Washington, DC 20506. TEL: 202-606-8400.

The International Reading Association sponsors six research grants and awards of $500 to $5,000 annually to support and honor individuals in the field of reading education. The Albert J. Harris Award honors the outstanding article about the prevention and/or assessment of reading and learning disabilities that was published in a professional journal or monograph between June 1, 1994-June 1, 1995. Deadline for submission of articles: Oct. 15. The Elva Knight Research Grant offers up to $5,000 for projects that address new and significant questions in literacy research and practice. Deadline: Oct. 31. All applicants must be members of the association. TEL: 302-731-1600, ext. 226.

Have you or your school won a national education award? Do you have information about interesting funding sources for teachers? Did you learn some important lessons while writing a successful grant application? Share your ideas and stories with other middle-level teachers by writing to Editor, Middle Ground, National Middle School Association, 2600 Corporate Exchange Drive, Suite 370, Columbus, OH 43231. FAX: 614-895-4750. We'll print the most interesting suggestions in future issues.

Respecting Our Differences: A Guide to Getting Along in a Changing World

"You don't have to love everyone you meet, but you don't have to hate them either." Quotes like these are filled throughout the book, *Respecting Our Differences.* Author Lynn Duvall describes different cultures and groups as teenagers would. She asks you questions and describes projects you could do to learn about different cultures.

For example, she asks you to imagine what it would be like to live in the United States if you couldn't speak English at all. Or, let's say you could speak it but only a little, and you had to repeat everything three or four times before people could understand you.

Teachers and students would enjoy this book because of its great quotes and interesting answers to questions. This book will help you become more tolerant and open towards people. Lynn Duvall describes ways you can study different groups — dance, music, books, articles, videos and films. This book helped me see how much better life would be if we learned more about others.

"Just because you don't agree with somebody or wouldn't do things the way he or she does — doesn't mean you can't respect each other and learn to get along," she writes. "Remember, one of the great things about being young is that you can reject what came before, and you can change what lies ahead."

Michelle T. Fernandez is an eighth-grader at Suzanne Middle School in Walnut, CA. She wrote this review under the direction of her social studies teacher Alan Haskvitz.

Respecting Our Differences: A Guide to Getting Along in a Changing World, by Lynn Duvall, Free Spirit Publishing Inc., 1994, 191 pages, $12.95. ISBN 0-915793-72-5

Review by Michelle T. Fernandez

Now and Forever: The Responsibilities of Sex

More than any other curricular area, sex education materials are selected and scrutinized to meet the needs and values of a specific community. As teachers, we recognize that the decisions our students make are based on both the information they receive and their individual experiences. We are constantly looking for exciting curriculum materials that include both creative presentation and the opportunity for students to develop critical-thinking skills.

In *Now and Forever: The Responsibilities of Sex,* Leach and Mertzlufft have compiled a collection of activities on topics such as self-esteem, abortion, abstinence, adoption, unplanned pregnancy, incest and AIDS. The units are interdisciplinary in nature, combining reading, writing, speaking, art, research, consumer and math skills. Most involve hands-on activity and are highly interactive. They would be helpful in designing a comprehensive health program that does not isolate sex education.

Many middle school students don't have access to accurate information that can help them make good decisions and avoid high-risk behaviors. Because *Now and Forever* does not include basic information on anatomy, puberty, pregnancy, birth control and disease prevention, some of the activities seem more appropriate for high school students who probably have a basic understanding of these issues. On the other hand, several activities could be adapted for middle school use such as keeping flour-sack babies. Likewise, activities related to self-esteem, respect and abuse could fit in the student advisory program or other areas of the health curriculum.

An interesting feature of the book is a series of interviews with people on related topics. While some of the content seems more appropriate for older students, the questions are

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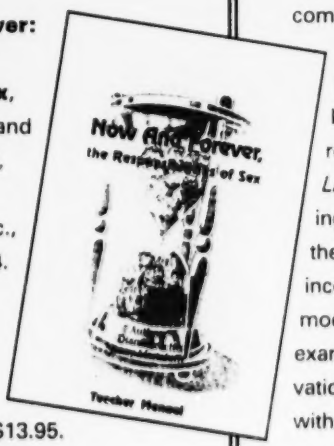
excellent and could lead to stimulating discussions. The program also recommends using a variety of speakers on topics, which is a good way to increase community involvement in schools. However, speakers should be screened and briefed about talking to middle school audiences.

I think teachers would consider *Now and Forever* an excellent supplement to a locally developed sexuality education program. A skilled teacher can use the creative, relevant activities to emphasize both the consequences of poor choices and the rewards of healthy ones.

Connie Ratcliffe teaches health in the Roanoke (VA) Public Schools.

Now and Forever: The Responsibilities of Sex, by Diana Leach and Nancy Mertzlufft, Accelerated Development Inc., Muncie, IN, 1994. Student workbook, 252 pages, $22.95; teacher's manual, 114 pages, $13.95. ISBN 1-55959-065-3.



Review by Connie Ratcliffe

Information Literacy: Educating Children for the 21st Century

Although written for elementary principals, this highly readable guide to resource-based learning would be valuable to middle-level librarians, teachers and anyone else who is interested in blending technology into the curriculum.

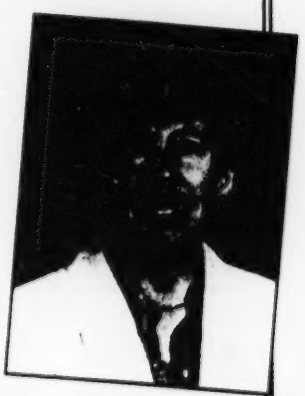
Breivik and Senn begin with a philosophy of education that is nearly synonymous with current middle school theory. That is, in order to become life-long learners who are considered literate in 21st century technology, students must be able to find, use and analyze data. They must be able to organize information and communicate effectively. These skills cannot be taught in isolation. They must be included in research questions that are meaningful for students. Library/media specialists must collaborate with classroom teachers to help students learn to use multimedia materials and community resources as tools for demonstrating achievement.

If Breivik and Senn had stopped here, their book would have been merely one of many resources available in the field. *Information Literacy*, however, contains much more, including practical ideas from teachers. For example, the authors describe an archaeology unit that incorporates library research, written logs and a model archaeology construction site. Another example shows how students from an Indian reservation in Wyoming use computers to discuss topics with their peers in other parts of the community.

For schools interested in starting a resource-based learning program, *Information Literacy* includes a step-by-step plan. The book includes names and addresses of organizations that can provide information and support.

Merryl Kravitz is assistant professor of education at New Mexico Highlands University in Las Vegas, NM, and vice president of the New Mexico Middle School Association.

Information Literacy: Educating Children for the 21st Century, by Patricia Senn Breivik and J.A. Senn, Scholastic Inc., 1994, 198 pages, $29.95. ISBN 0-590-49276-4. TEL: 212-505-4926.



Review by Merryl Kravitz

MG FAXBACK

This is what you thought...

In previous issues of *Middle Ground*, we asked you to share your best assessment strategies and adviser/advisee activities. Here are some of the responses:

Mastering the art of constructing a clear, fair rubric has been the key to my successful implementation of performance assessments in my classroom. My students and I jointly determine the criteria on which an assessment should be based and establish various attainable levels of performance. We then represent our expectations in a rubric so that every student can easily see what s/he needs to do to achieve the level of excellence s/he wants. Well-written rubrics have removed the fear of performance assessments for my students, their parents, the administration and me.

Cathie Jenkins
Wilson Middle School
Carlisle, PA

Our adviser/advisee breakfast proved to be the highlight of our first month at Bayside Middle School. The program began with a series of activities that promoted team building including establishing team names and flags and allowing students to get to know team members and their adviser. Our culminating event was a breakfast for all groups in each grade level. Advisers served cereal, muffins, juice and milk to their advisees. All of the teams explained how they chose their names. They presented their flags and led the group in a team cheer.

Jill Wiedmann
Bayside Middle School
Milwaukee, WI

To help ensure more success for state-required assessment, we changed our enrichment classes into K.E.R.A. (Kentucky Education Reform Act) Prep classes. Many enrichment activities remained the same, but we used open-response questions and performance events to assess student achievement even on these activities.

Along with the students, we designed guidelines for attacking the assessment items. Students would come up with a suitable rubric for the time and then proceed with an answer. Discussion and sharing followed each assessment item. Students became very comfortable with the format that would be used when the state assessment occurred in the spring.

Assessment anxiety did not seem to be a problem this year, and we feel that it was due, at least in part, to this preparation. We also hope it will be reflected in our assessment scores.

Alma Benedict
Kammerer Middle School
Louisville, KY

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Tell us what you think!

Service Learning aims to help students see their roles and responsibilities in the larger community. Service learning fits in with many popular school reform initiatives, including experiential education. Tell us, in 100 words or less, how you or your school have used service learning, particularly how you've blended service projects into the curriculum. We'll print some of your thoughts in a future issue of *Middle Ground*.

MG FAXBACK

FAX 502-899-1961 OR 614-895-4750

Simply fill in, copy, and FAXBACK.

Share your service learning strategies...

Name

School

Position

Address

City

State

Zip

TEL

FAX

MegaPHOnE!

Amusing, interesting and provocative comments from the field of middle-level education

"A recent *Wall Street Journal* article about a banana fungus included the fact that Americans spend about $3.4 billion a year on bananas. The average American consumes 27 pounds, about one banana a week. Now, $3.4 billion worth is a lot of bananas...But the figure also provides food for thought: What we spend on bananas every year is well over half of what we spend on instructional materials for schools — in all grades K-12, in all subjects, in all media. The highest 1994 estimate I have seen is close to $5 billion for everything from traditional textbooks to CD-ROMS...While $5 billion sounds like a lot of money, it is actually only about 2 percent of total noncapital school expenditures — about $100 per student. That plus another $100 might cover a dinner and theater for two in New York City."
— Cameron Moseley, chairman, Moseley Associates Inc., writing in EdPress News, *May 1995*

"I am very concerned about your journal writings. I realized that we've known each other for only a short period of time, but I know you well enough to say that you have a special gift to offer the world and ending life would only cheat us of your gifts...Either write back or talk to me please. Remember...I love you!—Mrs. Hultz."
—Sandra Hultz, seventh-grade science and language art teacher, writing in the journal of a student who was contemplating suicide, The (Louisville) Courier Journal, *June 23, 1995*

"Too many middle schools fail to take student achievement seriously, focusing instead on young adolescents' very real needs for understanding and support. In fact, students in the middle grades — most of them between the ages of 12 and 15— need both supportive learning environments and academic experiences that are concrete, engaging and demanding. Emphasizing the former at the expense of the latter does a disservice to students, particularly low achievers."
— Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, 1994 Annual Report.

"I think most teachers decide at one point in their lives, 'I've got to make a stand.' You can trust me on this that many teachers try to make changes. But their hands are slapped if the desired changes conflict with what the central office wants. Teachers feel the retaliation of not going along with the way things are planned."
— Cordia Booth, science teacher at Hill Middle School in Denver, speaking at the Education Writers Association annual conference, Denver, April, 1995.

"We are in the midst of another baby boom. In the next 10 years, an additional 7.1 million children are going to get up in the morning and go to school...Above all, we need to avoid the trap that has so often befallen American education: the inability to maintain a sustained drive for excellence. Too often we get distracted by the fad of the moment. What we need now, more than ever, is some old-fashioned American tenacity to stay on course."
— U.S. Secretary of Education Richard Riley, in his "State of American Education Address," delivered at Thomas Jefferson Middle School, Arlington, VA, Feb. 1995

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MIDDLE GROUND

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The Tenets of Teaming

Award-Winning Teachers Praise the Practice of Interdisciplinary Learning

By Holly Holland

The best middle school teaching teams share several common traits:

Teachers on these teams believe that young adolescents are intelligent people capable of making connections and decisions, not empty-headed children whose only role in school is passively receiving information one subject at a time.

They model the open-minded inquiry that they seek from students. And they struggle to work as members of a group, giving up their traditional control and isolation for a chance to learn from their colleagues.

Students at Magothy River Middle School in Arnold, MD, float "homemade" plankton, part of an award-winning interdisciplinary project focusing on the nearby Chesapeake Bay.

The four grand prize winners in the 1995 Prentice Hall/National Middle School Association Teaching Team Awards have made arduous adjustments and learned from the professional self-reflection such changes inspire.

"You have to understand there was nothing more energizing than this, but also nothing more frustrating," said Jan Robinson, a teacher at London Middle School in Buffalo Grove, IL, a member of one of the top teams.

"All I had known up until this point was working by myself in the classroom. What I did I was very good at. I hung my hat on being an excellent math teacher. I had to let go of the fact that I was no longer queen of my classroom, but an integral part of a team. Suddenly, we were experiencing what we were asking students to do...You simply must learn that diversity builds a better project."

Indeed, the prize-winning interdisciplinary project that Robinson and her colleagues undertook was so ambitious that it demanded both diverse skills and large numbers. Two years ago, six teachers and 140 seventh-graders from Cooper Junior High School in Buffalo Grove designed a new middle school.

The students didn't just produce a sketch that was later stored on a shelf. They had full authority from the superintendent to decide how to spend $6.5 million to convert an old building into a modern middle school. The students' responsibilities ranged from meeting building codes and negotiating with contractors to interviewing architects,

COVER STORY continued on p. 4

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Bulletin Board

News and happenings in middle level education

SMITHSONIAN
Offers Free Teaching Guide

The Smithsonian Office of Elementary and Secondary Education publishes a free, quarterly teaching guide for grades four through eight. Each issue of *Art to Zoo* provides a multidisciplinary exploration of topics such as technology's relation to society and the cultural influences on fashion. The publication includes sample lesson plans and resources and handouts in both English and Spanish.

For subscription information, write to the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, Smithsonian Institution, A & I 1163, MRC 402, Washington, DC 20560. TEL: 202-357-2425. FAX: 202-357-2116. TTY: 202-357-1696. *Art to Zoo* also is available online through the Internet (anonymous ftp to esead001@sivm.si.edu) and America Online (keyword Smithsonian).

"EXCUSE ME, DOES THIS LIBRARY HAVE A COPY OF *NEW MOON* MAGAZINE? HOW ABOUT *KSE NEWS? CURRENT SCIENCE?*"

If you want to to stock the school's library or give your students some fun magazines to read, a new book from the Educational Press Association of America and the International Reading Association provides information about publications that are appropriate for young adolescents. *Magazines for Kids and Teens* includes 249 listings of periodicals aimed at toddlers through young adults. Each listing describes the magazine's subject matter, target ages, cost and subscription information.

The publication, which costs $10, is available from the International Reading Association, 800 Barksdale Road, P.O. Box 8139, Newark, DE 19714-8139. TEL: 800-336-READ, ext. 266.

SHOUT IT TO THE RAFTERS:
ACADEMIC STARS COUNT

What if successful students were given the same kind of attention as school athletes, Jan Paschal wondered. What would happen if spectators stood in the bleachers and cheered academic achievers?

Paschal, the deputy secretary's regional representative to the U.S. Department of Education, recently began recruiting schools to honor a student at every school-sponsored sporting event. Her project, "Stand Up For Education," has been a huge hit in New Hampshire and other New England states.

"We've gotten a standing ovation (for students) wherever we've done it," she said. "It costs nothing, and it gives us a few minutes of focusing on why we're really here."

Paschal said participating schools typically set up a committee of educators and parents to select the student honorees. Some nominate students who have contributed to the community in significant ways, not just academic achievers.

Paschal hopes to involve schools on a national level. For more information, contact Paschal at 617-223-9317.

Agency Studies the Ground Beneath Your Feet

U.S. land use patterns have changed considerably over the past decade, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture has several resources to help students and teachers understand the trends. For example, conservation has reduced the rate of wetland loss from agriculture. And total soil erosion on cropland declined 30 percent from 1982-92. The National Resources Inventory (NRI), a survey of the nation's natural resources conducted every five years, includes statistics and graphics that describe the relationships between agriculture and the environment.

The NRI's color graphic highlights are available on the Internet through the Natural Resources Conservation Service's Home Page (http://www.ncg.nrcs.usda.gov). For print copies, contact any local office of the Natural Resources Conservation Service (available in most counties) and ask for the name and telephone number of the state public affairs specialist who can provide summaries of the National Resources Inventory.

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Sue Swaim, Executive Director
Holly Holland, Editor
April Tibbles, Production Manager
Katie Sullivan, Designer

UNFORGETTABLE HISTORY LESSONS

Note: Last summer, Robert Ziegenfuss, a teacher from Columbia, MD, and an East Region Trustee for NMSA, attended the three-day Arthur and Rochelle Belfer National Conference for Educators at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, DC. He shared these tips from his visit:

What does the museum include, and when is it appropriate to bring middle school students for a visit? The museum includes artifacts, photographs, films and eyewitness testimonies of the historical tragedy that led to the persecution and murder of six million Jews during the Nazi tyranny from 1933-45. Guided tours are available for teachers during the summer, but are not yet available for students. However, students can walk through the exhibits, a self-guided tour that lasts 60-90 minutes. Because of the harsh content and extent of the exhibits, students should be at least 11 years old when visiting. A shorter exhibit, Daniel's Story, is suitable for children ages 8-11.

What resources are available to middle-level teachers? The museum has a wealth of educational materials for teachers, including lesson plans, related literature and audio-visual references. The museum staff also will help teachers identify local resources.

Teachers also can apply to attend summer workshops at the museum, which include presentations and sessions on teaching the Holocaust.

How do I get more information? No reservations can be made over the telephone. For group reservations, write to the Coordinator of Scheduling, U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, 100 Raoul Wallenberg Place S.W., Washington, DC 20024. TEL: 202-488-0400. Groups of 10 people or more may schedule a tour any day between 10 a.m. and 3:30 p.m. (Spring and fall are extremely busy, so request early and suggest alternate dates.) Individual tickets are free at the door — there usually is a long line, so arrive early! You also can pay a small service charge and order tickets through Ticketmaster. TEL: 800-551-7328.

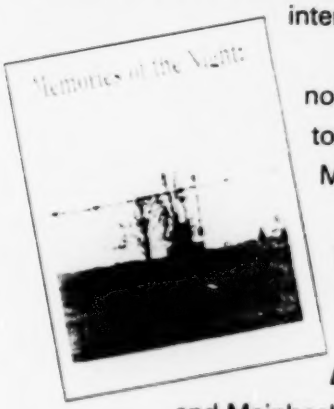
STUDY SEEKS SERVICE LEARNING PROGRAMS

Search Institute, in partnership with the National Youth Leadership Council and the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, seeks to identify excellent middle schools that have integrated service learning into the curriculum. By comparing these schools with a control group, Search Institute plans to study the effect of service learning on students' involvement with school and their academic performance.

Search Institute is especially interested in nominations from middle schools that have state-level support for integrated service learning. To nominate a school, contact Tom Berkas, Search Institute, 700 S. Third St., Suite 210, Minneapolis, MN 55415. TEL: 800-888-7828; FAX: 612-376-8956. The deadline for nominations is Feb. 15, 1996.

Middle School Teacher Writes Guide to Holocaust Study

Anita Meyer Meinbach, a middle school teacher from Miami, FL, had published several textbooks and resource books in reading and language arts. But three years ago, when she decided to write a guide to teaching the Holocaust, she couldn't find an interested publisher.



"They said nobody would want to read it," Meinbach said.

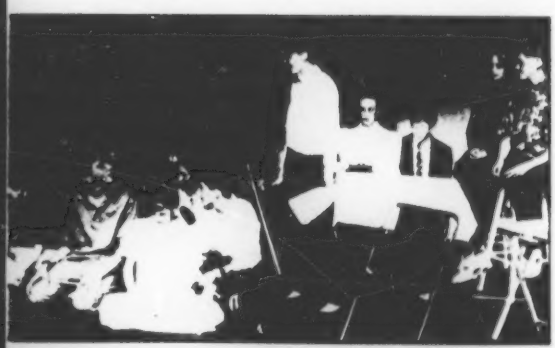
Then Stephen Spielberg's Oscar-winning film, *Schindler's List,* was released, and Meinbach's book suddenly became marketable. With fellow instructor Miriam Klein Kassenoff, Meinbach wrote *Memories of the Night: A Study of the Holocaust* (Frank Schaffer Publications Inc., 1994). The 148-page illustrated book includes historical background, ethical discussions, literature of the Holocaust, survivors' stories, a time line and bibliography. Sample questions and activities follow each chapter, and the authors also included ideas for independent projects.

Memories of the Night is geared to young adolescents, but the authors plan to expand it to include a high school curriculum. The book, which costs $17.95, is available at educational supply stores or by calling Schaffer Publications. TEL: 800-421-5565. ISBN 0-86734-777-5.

choosing computer equipment and selecting physical education uniforms. The students also had to make formal presentations to the school board, a parent-teacher organization and a panel of architects. And they had less than three weeks to complete their work.

In the process, the students asked and answered questions from the practical to the philosophical: What would an ideal middle school look like? How much does new construction cost versus renovation? What do the people who work and study in a school need to function effectively? Does plastic cost more than glass? How do you figure square feet?

A flexible block schedule provided time for in-depth research, mini lessons and field trips, as needed. Students worked on heterogeneous teams; teachers manipulated the random selection only to ensure that each team had at least one good illustrator.



Top: Students at Eagleview Middle School in Colorado Springs, CO, portray American pioneers in a play, part of an award-winning team teaching project called "Voices and Visions."

Bottom: Rachel Olefsky, left, and Dana Tedio, right, prepare a floor plan for a new middle school designed by students. The interdisciplinary project earned top honors for teachers at London Middle School in Buffalo Grove, IL.

Gerard Puhy, a teacher on the team, said one of the hardest things for him was letting students run their group discussions and solve their own problems.

"There are a lot of limitations that teachers know," he said. "Students don't see that."

For example, Puhy said, members of his group wanted to know whether they could go see the building they were redesigning. Puhy's inclination was to say no. Instead, he told his students to "find out." The students contacted school district officials to get permission to enter the building, arranged for parents to drive them there, then toured the building and took photographs to show their classmates.

"They came back to school and said to the other students, 'Hey gang, we can't do this and this," Puhy said. "'We went to the building and checked it out. It won't work the way we planned.'

"When the motivation is good, they work so hard. It's hard to keep up with them."

Although this particular project was brief, it was part of an extended exercise in group problem-solving for the Buffalo Grove students and teachers. Five years ago, 14 middle school teachers from the district spent six weeks designing the integrated, theme-based learning model that the team from Cooper Junior High School eventually tried. All the teachers at the new London Middle School — the one the students designed — use theme-based learning, and the concept has started spreading to other schools.

"I've never seen such growth in kids," Robinson said. "I would never go back."

Research shows that interdisciplinary teaming can give students and teachers a greater sense of empowerment than those in departmentalized schools. In their study of 16 middle-level schools, reported in the Nov. 1994 issue of *Middle School Journal*, Ronald E. Husband and Paula M. Short found that interdisciplinary teaching teams share the same sense of accomplishment as self-directed work teams in industry. Both "see the end results of their efforts," the researchers said.

Turning Points, the Carnegie Corp.'s path breaking report on middle-level education, suggested that when students solve problems that extend across multiple subjects they "see systems, not disconnected facts."

However, teachers should approach interdisciplinary teaming carefully. In the Spring 1995 *Brief to Principals* from the University of Wisconsin's Center on Organization and Restructuring of Schools, Sharon Kruse and Karen S. Louis asserted that teachers and students sometimes identify so strongly with their teams that they "lose sight of school-wide goals, focus and community." In addition, Kruse and Louis said, "teachers unwilling to deal directly with conflict within their teams strike compromises instead. Team members end up trading comfort for critical analysis of their work."

Penny Vahsen, whose team from Magothy River Middle School in Arnold, MD, was among the grand prize winners, said some teachers don't work well together and may need to switch partners after initial

adjustments fail. Although her team members eventually became close, Vahsen said, they had to work out some differences. At first, Vahsen said she and her colleagues teamed "in name only."

"Our four people are probably as diverse in our teaching styles and personalities as you can imagine," she said. "That's fine. This is good for the kids. They can understand that everyone is unique in their own way. We do a lot of group projects where they have to rely on each other and identify their strengths to make the group work."

"When the motivation is good, they work so hard. It's hard to keep up with them."

Magothy River's interdisciplinary project focused on the Chesapeake Bay; it included chemical tests on water and soil samples, crab dissections, an environmental letter-writing campaign and a working model of the bay inside the classroom.

Mike Bonner believes that interdisciplinary teaming is a process that teachers are constantly trying to perfect. Bonner, whose team from Milliken Middle School in Lewisville, TX, won one of the four grand prizes, said he and his colleagues regularly analyze the way they group students and arrange the school schedule.

The team's award-winning project, "Murder Along the Oregon Trail," focused on America's westward expansion. It featured a whodunit investigation that included computer research, integrated geometry and scientific analysis of rocks and minerals. Students dressed as pioneers, cooked wagon train food and assumed the identity of a pioneer for journal writing.

"I found that the students are a lot smarter and know a lot more than I thought they did," Bonner said, adding that the project "gave the students an opportunity to shine in different areas — to express their individuality, but also help the group. All of the students learned that everyone has something to offer."

Like Bonner's team, teachers at Eagleview Middle School in Colorado Springs, CO, wanted to help students witness the power of diversity. Working with a local museum, Linda Thompson and Kay Esmiol designed an integrated English and social studies project that required eighth-graders to collect oral histories and analyze biographical literature. The culminating event of the "Voices and Visions" project was a three-hour retrospective that students produced at a public theater about 33 diverse women who settled the Colorado frontier.

To prepare for their project, the Eagleview students interviewed their parents and grandparents about historical events to help them develop primary source research skills. Students wrote an autobiography, biographies of their parents and grandparents, and fiction and poetry based on their families' experiences.

"We wanted them to understand how experience affects people's lives," Thompson said, and that "you don't have to be rich and famous in order to make a contribution to the community." ■

For a 1996 Teaaching Team Award Application
Call 1-800-528-NMSA

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Grand prize winners — one from each NMSA region — received $3,000 per team, a trip to NMSA's annual conference in New Orleans, a team membership in NMSA and $200 to spend on middle-level resources. First prize winners in each region received $250 to spend on resources and a team membership in NMSA. Here's a list of the winners.

WEST REGION

NORTH REGION

SOUTH REGION

EAST REGION

National Science Education Standards Draw Picture of Reform

By Linda Froschauer

Whether you're an educator, a parent, a school board member or a politician, the new *National Science Education Standards* is a resource you should know about. A joint project of the National Academy of Science and the federal government, the *National Science Education Standards* seeks to improve science instruction at all levels.

Although not meant to be a checklist for science coverage, the standards document provides examples of the kind of scientific inquiry that all classes should include. Among the basic principles:

- All students, regardless of their background or interests, must have the opportunity to become scientifically literate.
- All students must learn science in all content areas.
- All students must learn science through active, research-based instruction.
- More resources — time, personnel and materials — must be devoted to science education.
- Science instruction at the K-12 level must be intellectually rigorous.
- Efforts to improve science instruction must be part of all systemic education reform initiatives.

The *National Science Education Standards* is divided into six areas: *Teaching standards* provide a vision for excellent science instruction, including planning, classroom management and assessment. A related section deals with the *professional development* of teachers. This section speaks to the need for life-long learning in science and education, a goal that requires teachers to be actively involved in their own training. The *assessment* strand challenges us to ensure that standardized tests and in-class exams accurately and fairly measure the academic gains made by students. The *content* standards outline what students should know, understand and be able to do in science. They are sub-divided into eight categories — "Science as Inquiry"; "Physical Science"; "Life Science"; "Earth and Space Science"; "Science and Technology"; "Science in Personal & Social Perspectives"; "History and Nature of Science"; and "Unifying Concepts and Processes." The last two standards speak to the support that is necessary for science education reform to occur. *Program* standards focus on the curriculum, resources and access to learning by all students in a school. The *system* standards focus on the broader support systems provided by district and state levels. Taken together, all of the standards form a map of reform.

Two sections of the *National Science Education Standards* probably will be most important to classroom teachers who are trying to analyze, improve or change their instruction.

The *content* and *assessment* standards are broken down into grade bands that indicate what students should know by the end of fourth, eighth and 12th grades. It's relatively easy to go to the content standards and find the section for each science discipline by grade band. You will find a list of items in each standard clearly written and defined. However, please don't use the items as a checklist. To meet the standards, students must do more than just cover the material, memorize it and move on. Instead, they must gain understanding and meaning through active instruction. Student inquiry should be emphasized in all lessons.

Assessment should provide feedback about student achievement, demonstrating whether students have met expectations. Assessment should not be viewed as an afterthought but as an integral part of curriculum development. The *assessment* standard provides information about the types of assessment, their technical quality, fairness and ease of use.

Assessment should provide feedback about student achievement, demonstrating whether students have met expectations.

The *National Science Education Standards* will be supported by several other initiatives. The National Science Teachers Association's Scope Sequence and Coordination Project provides some direction for shaping course offerings at the middle and high school levels. The American Association for the Advancement of Science Project 2061, through its publications *Science for All Americans* and *Benchmarks for Science Literacy*, promotes science literacy and provides suggestions for achieving it.

The National Science Teachers Association also is preparing materials that will support the *National Science Education Standards* and provide teachers with tools for curriculum development and implementation. *Compatibility Guidelines for the National Science Education Standards* is a document in three volumes, one at each of the instructional levels (K-4, 5-8, 9-12). It offers teachers strategies to help them align their instruction, resources and assessments with the *National Science Education Standards*. This is done through descriptive dialogue and examples.

In addition, the American Association for the Advancement of Science's Project 2061 plans to publish *Blueprints for Reform*, a document that will identify what must be done to support curriculum reforms. *Designs for Science Literacy* will be a handbook for educators who want to take a systemic, goal-oriented approach to curriculum design; it will include descriptions of curriculum blocks and models. Project 2061 also is compiling a computer-based collection of resources.

Until now, we have not had national goals in science education.Textbook publishers and testing companies have largely determined the national science curriculum for schools. Granted, textbook publishers and testing companies take state frameworks into account when designing their materials, but they have been in control. The National Science Education Standards returns the decision to teachers by giving them a variety of instructional choices based on a sound vision for science education.

Linda Froschauer teaches science at Weston Middle School in Weston, CT, and is the National Science Teachers Association, Middle Level Director.

RESOURCES: AAAS Project 2061*: Science for All Americans,* $11.95*; Benchmarks for Science Literacy,* $21.95, both available from Oxford University Press, 200 Madison Ave., New York, NY 10016.

NSTA Scope, Sequence and Coordination Project*: National Science Education Content Standards,* $3.95*; The Content Core: Vol. I,* $16.95*; A Middle School Framework for National Science Education* and *National Science Education Compatibility Guidelines* — soon to be released — available from the National Science Teachers Association, 1740 Wilson Blvd., Arlington, VA 22201-3000. TEL: 800-830-3232.

The National Science Education Standards, $19.95, available from The National Academy of Science, National Research Council, 2101 Constitution Ave., N.W., Washington, DC 20418. TEL: 800-624-6242.

Monday Morning

Practical ideas and strategies from the experiential files of middle school teachers.

Georgia Students Enjoy Wrestling in the Library

When Cartersville (GA) Middle School coach Beasey Hendrix held tryouts for the wrestling team two years ago, 30 new students showed up. Most knew nothing about the sport, so Hendrix took them to the school library to find some information.

Pat Turner, the school's library media specialist, saw it as an opportunity to link the students' interest in wrestling with reading. She located a few wrestling magazines and how-to books. But when she couldn't keep up with student demand, Turner used a resource guide to find some literature that included wrestling themes.

Meanwhile, Hendrix and other coaches used some of their practice time to give students pep talks about reading. Male and female athletes started stopping by the school library to find books and magazines on their sports.

"They really respect the coaches," Turner said. "If they see a coach standing up there talking about the importance of reading, then they know it's not just something nerds do."

Turner designated one display case in the library for sports books and labeled sports materials with orange labels to make them easier for students to find. She also stuck lists of related books in sports magazines to encourage more reluctant readers to branch out.

This school year, Cartersville initiated a language enrichment program in which every teacher in the school reads aloud to students 10 minutes a day, twice a week, and focuses on vocabulary-building activities on alternate days.

"It's made everybody more aware of the importance of reading," she said.

MARCH IS NATIONAL MIDDLE LEVEL EDUCATION MONTH

Every year in March, National Middle School Association and the National Association of Secondary School Principals jointly sponsor a month-long celebration of education in the middle grades.

At Rolla Middle School in Rolla, MO, National Middle Level Education month "has gotten to be a big celebration," said sixth-grade teacher Cathy Paulsmeyer. For the past five years, teachers and students at Rolla have used the occasion to "highlight that we're all in this together," she said.

Over the years, students have written personal narratives and poetry about middle school, designed posters to display at local businesses, served as ambassadors to the community and composed a school song. Teachers focus their lessons on middle school issues. Parents and grandparents participate in assemblies, lunches and conferences with teachers.

Among the most popular activities, Paulsmeyer said, is a picture contest in which students try to guess the identity of adults in the school community. Themes have included "Babies — Aren't They Cute"; "We Were Once in Middle School (Look at those hairstyles!)"; and "Having Fun With the Family (Teachers don't live at school!)."

A school assembly is the culminating event at Rolla's middle school week. One year a retired teacher shared her memories of education in Rolla over time. Another time a Rolla teacher, who also attended the school as a student, spoke about her experiences then and now.

"It doesn't seem like work when everyone is pulling together," Paulsmeyer said.

We borrowed these ideas for celebrating middle level education month from an issue of *Power Lines*, the newsletter of the Florida League of Middle Schools:

- Send a press release about middle school month to your local newspaper.
- Take a middle school student to lunch.
- Resolve to make one positive phone call to a parent every Wednesday in March.
- Ask department stores to plug middle schools in their regular ads.
- Invite the superintendent to teach a class at your school.
- Display student work at the mall or library.
- Invite community leaders to read books to students.
- Ask students to take some positive public service announcements.
- Invite parents and grandparents to school for lunch.
- Ask a local reporter to shadow a student for the day.
- Send a teacher to a service club to talk about middle school.
- Invite all your business partners to a before-school thank you breakfast.
- Hold a teacher and/or student hobby show.
- Serve a big middle school celebration cake to your staff.

For a 1996 National Middle Level Education Month Kit...
Call 1-800-528-NMSA

Lights, Camera, Confidence—

Arizona Students Turn to T.V. Show for Lessons About Life

By Mary Jacobson

POWER in the middle

Teachers and students making powerful progress in the classroom

Valeco Woolfolk works as a video mixer, camera operator, sound board engineer, character generator and part-time director for the Math Time cable television show in Nogales, AZ.

In his spare time he also attends the eighth grade at Peerson Middle School.

One of about 20 student volunteers, Valeco is part of a team that helps shape the successful educational show under the guidance of Marcella Schacher, audio-visual director for the Nogales Unified School District.

Valeco's friend, Gabe Arana, a Peerson seventh-grader, said his experience directing the show and operating equipment has fueled his desire to pursue a career in television production.

"I've made a lot of friends on the show because it deals with people who are interested in a lot of the same things I am," Gabe said. "I want to be a video director."

Respect for hard work, career planning, friendships — these are some of the intangible benefits students receive through the hands-on lessons provided at Math Time, a two-year-old initiative sponsored by the Nogales School District. The show, which runs for an hour Monday through Thursday nights, enables students to call in during the live broadcasts and get help with their homework. Schacher screens the calls at a control board and forwards them to a middle school math teacher who acts as the show's host and guides the caller and the audience through problem-solving possibilities. The teacher usually responds to about 10 questions each night, Schacher said, but many more children call in.

"The most calls we get are on Thursday nights," she said. "I guess all the tests are on Fridays."

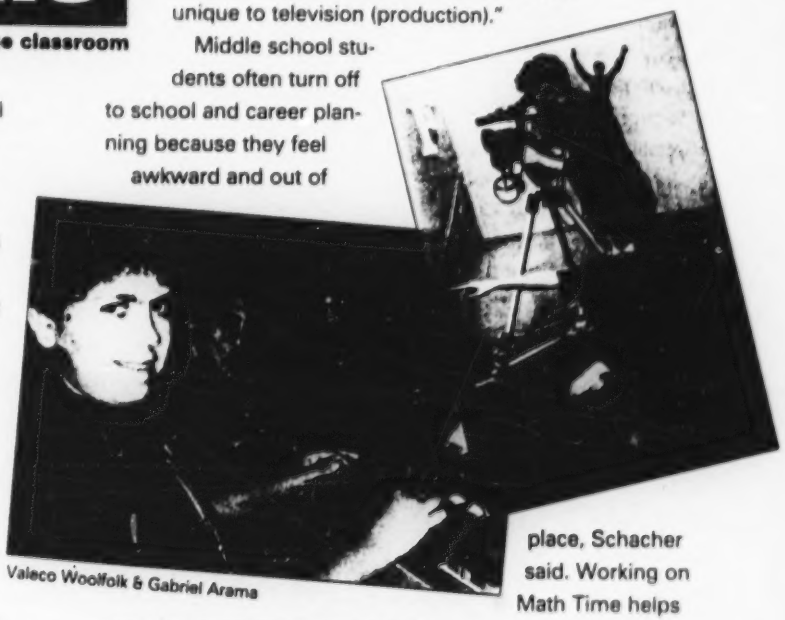
Math Time also features a "problem of the night," usually a word problem that requires a series of steps to solve. The student who calls in with the correct answer wins a gift certificate to a local fast-food restaurant.

Schacher said the district started the show to get parents more involved in their children's math studies, figuring that television was a good way to reach them at home. The district uses federal Title I funds to pay for the show, which primarily includes the cost of Schacher's salary. A local cable company donates air time, and businesses donate equipment and food for the crew.

The student crew members must volunteer at least two hours one night a week, but most work more often. Students said the show has taught them the importance of writing, teamwork, organization and fun.

"The kids are almost like a good gang," Schacher said. "We even have hand signals that are unique to television (production)."

Middle school students often turn off to school and career planning because they feel awkward and out of place, Schacher said. Working on Math Time helps them feel responsible and capable.



Valeco Woolfolk & Gabriel Arama

"I have one special-education student who thinks he can't read or write, but he's been writing and reading titles for the show," she said. "His parents can't believe it."

Math Time has been so successful that Schacher and her student volunteers are developing other cable shows, including a news show and a weekly show to help first-graders with language and math skills.

"I really treat them as young adults," Schacher said. "If you're open to learning from the students, if you'll let them pull you a little, you'll be surprised where they'll take you." ■

SNAPshots

Profiles and news about award-winning schools and teachers...

Almost any teacher, principal or librarian would relish the chance to spend four to six weeks during the summer getting paid to study a favorite topic, or as one official termed it, "to pursue knowledge for its own sake."

The highly competitive national fellowships for Independent Study in the Humanities attracted 782 submissions for the 176 awards announced last spring, although educators requested about 10,000 applications. About 15 percent of the fellowships went to middle level educators. The winning teachers and librarians received $3,200 for six weeks of study; principals received $2,100 for four weeks of study.

The Council for Basic Education, which sponsors the fellowships with funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities and others, gives most weight to the intellectual strength of the applicant's study plan and the contribution to his or her scholarship.

It took two tries for Barbara Keough, an English teacher at Dover-Sherborn Regional Junior High School in Dover, MA, to produce a successful application — about 15 percent of the fellows accepted each year have been rejected at least once before. After taking some college courses in Australian children's literature, Keough initially applied for a fellowship to continue studying that genre. She worked hard preparing the application, including pre-reading all the books on her proposed list. But she was not successful the first time — Keough believes the reason was that she hadn't shown that she could do scholarly research and present a manageable work-study plan.

A year later, when Keough applied to study grandmothers in children's literature, her application was much more focused. She asked a retired school librarian to serve as her mentor before and during the project.

"I think it's really important to have someone to talk to about what you're learning," she said.

Keough said she pursued her topic because, as a grandmother and an older teacher, she wanted to learn how to improve both roles.

"I think education always makes me surer of myself," she said.

Carolyn Maxey, a librarian at Calabosas Middle School in Tumacacori, AZ, credits the fellowship with helping her understand the history and culture of her mostly Mexican-American students. When Maxey started working at the library in a new middle school/high school complex, she found no books about Spanish-speaking people, much less anything directly related to Chicano history or literature. She turned to the Universityof Arizona as a resource, eventually reading 40 books that helped her trace Chicano literature and history from 1960 to the present.

Maxey used a $200 stipend from the fellowship and $2,000 in grants from local sources to buy many of the books for the school's library. She said teachers, students and parent volunteers in the library have been thrilled to discover resources that they didn't know existed.

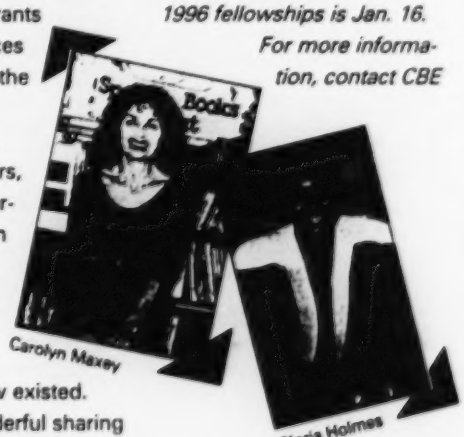
"It's a wonderful sharing experience," she said.

The humanities fellowship enabled Dr. Gloria Graves Holmes, an English teacher at South Middle School in Brentwood, NY, to continue research on the subject of her doctoral dissertation, the African-American author Zora Neale Hurston. Holmes wanted to study the influence of Christianity and the Blues on Hurston's short stories; her dissertation had focused on Hurston's novels.

Although Holmes said most of Hurston's work is not appropriate for young adolescents, she believes her enthusiasm for reading and life-long learning is catching.

"I frequently let my students know that I've been in school most of my adult life," she said. "Learning doesn't end at the 12th grade, or even at the end of college."

The deadline for the 1996 fellowships is Jan. 16. For more information, contact CBE at 1319 F. St., N.W., Suite 900, Washington, DC 20004-1152. TEL: 202-347-4171. Because an independent panel judges applications, CBE staff members will provide feedback and assistance with project proposals. ■



Carolyn Maxey

Gloria Holmes

AWARDS

Top: Students at Jones Middle School in San Antonio paint over graffiti.

Bottom: Winners of the Mayor's Youth Award for Volunteers of the Year.

Linda Pruski had the enviable task last summer of trying to decide how to spend $32,500 that she and her students at Anson Jones Middle School in San Antonio won for helping to clean up the environment. Pruski and her Graffiti Grapplers won first place in the middle school category and the overall grand prize in the Anheuser-Busch "A Pledge and a Promise Environmental Awards."

(Second place and $5,000 went to St. Francis De Sales School in Philadelphia, for a project to reduce air pollution and attack childhood asthma. Third place and $2,500 went to Suzanne Middle School in Walnut, CA, for a water conservation project.)

The Jones Middle School Graffiti Grapplers is a school club that was born four years ago when some of Pruski's science students asked her what they could to improve the environment. The group's first project was painting over the graffiti on an abandoned building near school and cleaning up litter. Pruski and her students later expanded their efforts to include painting over graffiti on overpasses, boarding up abandoned buildings, planting wildflowers and trees and cleaning up a two-mile stretch of the San Antonio River. A typical clean-up project after school and on weekends now attracts at least 35 teachers and 100 students, she said.

Pruski decided to use the prize winnings to erect a small building near the school to house the club's power mowers, recycling bins and paints; enlarge the school's vegetable and herb garden; and expand a neighborhood composting project. The Graffiti Grapplers also have their own page on the World Wide Web (http://tristero.com/sa/grapplers) and plan to publish a "How to Grapple" guide book. For more information, contact Pruski at Jones Middle School, 1256 Pinn Road, San Antonio, TX 78227. TEL: 210-678-2100.

Five middle school teachers were among 33 teachers nationwide who won fellowships sponsored by the National Endowment for the Arts and the Getty Center for Education in the Arts and run by the Council for Basic Education.

Winning teachers received $3,000 each to pursue four to eight weeks of independent study and $200 each to buy books for their schools. The fellows included Wendy E. Cochran, Aptos Middle School, Oakland, "Blending Worlds: The Study of Afro-Cuban Culture"; Sarah D. Breed, James Denman Middle School, San Francisco, "A Study of West African Dance"; Lauren N. Carson, Barnstable Middle School at Marstons Mills, East Falmouth, MA, "From the Gullah: Folktales of the Carolina Coast"; Elizabeth A. Maclaren, Buckingham, Browne and Nichols Middle School, West Newton, MA, "Topeng: Mask and Performance in Bali"; and Suzanne J. Terrien, Cape Elizabeth Middle School, Cape Elizabeth, ME, "Hand Echoes: Exploring a Synthesis of African Pottery Tradition and Japanese Aesthetics in Wheel-thrown Vessels."

Seven middle level teaching teams also won National Science Foundation fellowships to pursue independent study projects combining math/science and the humanities. Each teacher received $2,300 and $300 for books and materials for their schools.

The Sci-Mat Fellows included Peter G. Olson and Kari A. Hopper, Fort Bragg Middle School, Fort Bragg, CA, "Titanic: Voyage of Discovery"; Kimberly Davy Ussery, Wilson Middle School, Indio, CA, and Deanna Baker, Menifee Valley Middle School, Menifee, CA, "A Mighty Endeavor: Men, Ships and the Sea"; Rollas Batten and Michael Mead, Great Falls Middle School, Montague, MA, "Sawmill River Project"; Robert Mugione and Linda Rush, Lauer Middle School, Easton, PA, "Liftoff and Literature: A Study Linking Space Exploration to Language Arts"; Gerry Waller and Gail P. Jackson, Driscoll Middle School, San Antonio, "Escape Connections"; Susan Erba, Foxcroft Middle School, Middleburg, VA, and Paul Erba, Quantico Middle School, Quantico, VA, "Using Fractal Geometry and Chaos Theory to Better Understand the Interconnectedness of Literature and Mathematics"; and Helen C. Stone and Jennifer L. Schooler, Stafford Middle School, Stafford, VA, for "From Science Fiction to Science Fact."

For more information about the awards, write to the Council for Basic Education, 1319 F St., N.W., Washington, DC 20004. TEL: 202-347-4171.

Have you or your school won a national education award? Do you have information about interesting funding sources for teachers? Did you learn some important lessons while writing a successful grant application? Share your ideas and stories with other middle level teachers by writing to Editor, Middle Ground, National Middle School Association, 2600 Corporate Exchange Drive, Suite 370, Columbus, OH 43231. FAX: 614-895-4750. We'll print the most interesting suggestions in future issues.

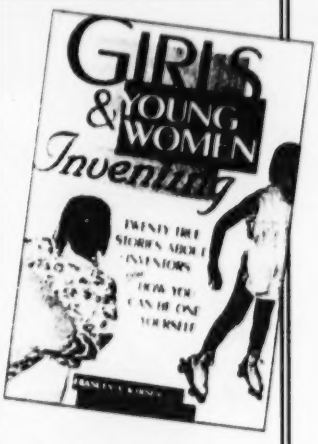
Girls and Young Women Inventing: Twenty True Stories About Adventures, Plus How You Can Become One Yourself

As I read *Girls and Young Women Inventing*, I had a reaction that the authors undoubtedly intended — I kept wondering why I, or one of my students, had not come up with the idea first. This book was very empowering, both personally and professionally. It made inventing seem fun and, although not necessarily easy, certainly not as difficult as I had imagined. The girls who were profiled in this book clearly have found invention to be a meaningful conduit to the world of science.

This is a wonderful book to help motivate middle school students discover the power of invention. The book is divided into three sections, each with a different purpose. Part One includes stories about adolescent inventors and their creations. Part Two provides step-by-step instructions on how to be an inventor and market your ideas. Part Three consists of resources, including a wonderful series of quotations by inventors.

My only criticism concerns the mini-biographies. All of the inventors mentioned are high academic achievers who typically earned grades worthy of the school honor roll, attended gifted and talented programs and/or came from intact and loving families. I wonder if students who have not traditionally excelled in school will identify with these role models. And though this book was designed to get girls more interested in science and technology, it might have been more useful if the authors had included some examples of adolescent boys inventing.

Sharon Mensing is the math/science coordinator at Oxford Central School, Oxford, NJ.



Girls and Young Women Inventing: Twenty True Stories About Inventors, Plus How You Can Become One Yourself,
by Frances A. Karnes and Suzanne M. Bean, Free Spirit Publishing, 1995, $12.95. ISBN : 0-915793-89-X. TEL: 612-338-2068.

Review by Sharon Mensing

Math and Music: Harmonious Connections

Last summer, on an Internet discussion group for musicians, something peculiar happened. A cello player mentioned that his graduate degree in mathematics was keeping him from playing his instrument. A string player, also a theoretical physicist, commiserated. Soon it was obvious that many of the musicians on line were also mathematicians, scientists, computer specialists and engineers.

Albert Einstein, mathematician and violinist, would not have been surprised. Neither would Edward Teller, physicist and pianist, nor Albert Schweitzer, physician, organist and Bach authority. Members of the music department at California State University at Fullerton also would nod in understanding. Cal State has discovered that the clearest predictor of future success in music studies is the SAT math score.

Math and Music: Harmonious Connections delivers a little more music than math, but that is all the better for middle school teachers of math and science who want some applications for classroom use and their own enjoyment. The authors, who teach at the Head-Royce School in Oakland, write in an engaging style as they reveal dozens of connections between music, math and science. Examples include supporting background, musical notation and theory.

The authors discuss how teachers can relate fractions to time signatures (the three-fourths time of a waltz), note length and measures. (A chart compares notes to fractions and powers of two.) A lesson on syncopation can evolve into a discussion of least common multiples.

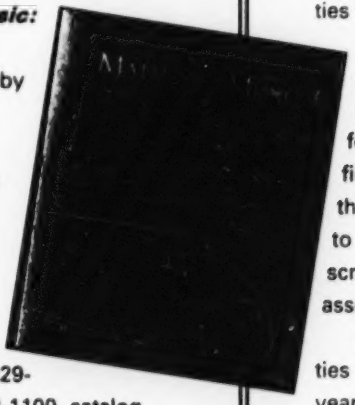
The book demonstrates how a lesson on wave theory — which is the basis for musical tone — can be introduced with diagrams, falling dominoes and Slinky toys. String harmonics, which professional orchestra players use to tune their instruments, can lead to a discussion of wavelength, frequency, period and pitch.

Other curiosities mentioned in the book:

Fireflies synchronize their pulsing light. Crickets chirp to a beat determined by the temperature shown in the linear equation c=4t-160, with c representing the number of chirps per minute and t representing the Fahrenheit temperature.

From bugs to bugles, *Math and Music: Harmonious Connections* delivers rich classroom applications for both math and science at the middle level.

Don Cram teaches math and science at Kahuku High and Intermediate School in Oahu, HI.



Math and Music: Harmonious Connections, by Trudi Hammel Garland and Charity Vaughn Kahn, Dale Seymour Publications, 1995, 162 pages, $13.25. ISBN 0-86651-829-0. TEL: 800-872-1100, catalog order #21335.

Review by Don Cram

Prescriptions for Success in Heterogeneous Classrooms

Educators communicating on the Internet discussion group Middle-L last summer had a long discussion about using cooperative learning in the classroom. The participants all agreed that choosing appropriate tasks was critical to making cooperative learning a success for students.

In *Prescriptions for Success in Heterogenous Classrooms*, Dr. Sandra Schurr offers a variety of instructional approaches in a very user-friendly format. Schurr, director of the National Resource Center for Middle Grades/High School Education at the University of South Florida, includes 28 "prescriptions" for active and interactive class exercises in all content areas, including activities for interdisciplinary study, learning centers, group work, individual instruction and portfolios.

In the introduction, Schurr lists her criteria for including prescriptions: Students must find them motivating, teachers must find them manageable and parents must be able to understand them. In addition, the prescriptions must be compatible with authentic assessments.

I really appreciated the diversity of activities offered. I found five that I plan to use this year in my reading class, 11 that I'd like to try out in my social studies classes, six in my advisory periods and 10 that should help improve my teaching in general. The only major flaw was that some page numbers were not the same as those referred to in the prescriptions.

I heartily recommend this book!

Sherry Cashwell teaches social studies at Summit Parkway Middle School in Columbia, SC.

Prescriptions for Success in Heterogenous Classrooms, by Sandra L. Schurr, National Middle School Association, 1995, 182 pages, $24 (20 percent discount to members. ISBN 1-56090-097-0. TEL: 800-528-NMSA, catalog order # 1222.

Review by Sherry B. Cashwell

MG FAXBACK

This is what you thought...

In the last issues of *Middle Ground*, we asked you to share your best ideas about service learning. Here are some of the responses:

The "Reach Back" program is designed to get minority adolescents off the streets and focused on positive career paths. The program offers activities and workshops throughout the year on topics such as health, career planning and violence prevention. Reach Back also offers a mentoring program in which adolescents are paired up with older students or adults who serve as positive role models and provide advice and guidance. Sponsored by the Martha Holden Jenning Fund and Fidelity Baptist Program holds monthly workshops throughout the year on everything from career education to minority issues.

Bennie F. Neal Sr.
Harry E. Davis Middle Village
Cleveland, OH

The demands of curriculum, intramurals, music programs, athletics and interests outside schools make the inclusion of service projects difficult. We looked to our advisory program for help. We are attempting to connect students to their school and community. Some projects include writing to and making things for nursing home residents; making teddy bears for children with AIDS; sewing quilts for residents of homeless shelters; giving welcome cards to new middle school students; and making educational games for elementary school students. A single square of a quilt does not keep you warm, but when sewn with many others it creates warmth, beauty, satisfaction and a sense of accomplishment.

Edward B. Plocki, Colleen Angel
Lamberton Middle School
Carlisle, PA

For more than a decade, my students have worked on service learning projects. During that time, I have learned how to integrate, assess and build support for a program that is the only one I know of which can show a relationship between community service work and improved student performance on standardized tests.

My students' work has run the gamut from small projects to worldwide events, all within the curriculum and honoring the most vital element of such projects — no free labor.

The Constitutional Rights Foundation (213-487-5590), Lillian Stephen's *The Complete Guide to Learning Through Community Service Learning*, and the journal, *Teaching and Change*, have recently published parts of the program.

If you want additional information, contact me at 909-594-1730.

Alan Haskvitz
Suzanne Middle School
Walnut, CA

The "City Youth" program, created by the Constitutional Rights Foundation, has been instrumental in giving our disadvantaged students hope as well as a feeling of accomplishment. The program focuses on teaching problem-solving skills while working on *doable* service projects. It is an interdisciplinary program that helps strengthen our core team, as well as building a team spirit among our students. The lessons are interesting and fun to boot!

Mary Beth West, Merrell Frankel, Bob Hunter
Berendo Middle School
Los Angeles

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Tell us what you think!

Interdisciplinary teaming is a recommended practice for middle schools because it helps students see the relationships among subjects and expands the skills of teachers. However, shifting to the team approach can be a tough assignment, requiring significant adjustments in scheduling and instruction. Tell us, in 100 words or less, how you or your school have used interdisciplinary teaming to improve learning. We'll print some of your thoughts in a future issue of *Middle Ground*.

MG FAXBACK

FAX 502-899-1961 OR 614-895-4750

Simply fill in, copy, and FAXBACK.

Share your interdisciplinary teaming strategies...

Name

School

Position

Address

City

State

Zip

TEL

FAX

MegaPHOnE!

Amusing, interesting and provocative comments from the field of middle level education

"Someday all people will be equal. But I don't think I'll see that day. I'm half East Indian and half Filipino. And because of that, kids have picked on me, called me names and even made fun of the things my mom makes me for lunch. I don't cry about it now like I did when I was a kid. And I am beginning to forgive and forget. But it has changed some of my thoughts. I'm much more cautious about people, for example. And I always welcome any new kid to school. I know what it feels like to be left out."
— Ravi Jain, a student at Van Hoosen Middle School, Rochester Hills, MI, writing in a USA Weekend *special series on Teens & Race, Aug. 18-20, 1995.*

"My parents taught me all people should be treated equally. I believe that, too, but I'm not always treated equally at school. If a black kid does something bad, some teachers just shrug it off. Maybe they think these kids have been treated unfairly for so long that they have to be easier on them. But I don't think that does any good. And it's not fair."
— Thomas Nicholas, a student at Boynton Middle School, Ithaca, NY, writing in a USA Weekend *special series on Teens & Race, Aug. 18-20, 1995.*

"I really don't have a problem with the age limit to drive In my town, we can drive at 14. I think 14 is a pretty fair age. It doesn't bother me."
— Sherri McGregor, 12, Salem, ND, writing in Kids Today, *Sept. 3, 1995.*

"We got eight new science labs this year, and I got really excited. But my teacher really goes by the book. It's kind of disappointing because I've got friends who have different teachers who are really into labs. It's a lot easier to learn when it's exciting. Book work is not the greatest thing in the world."
— Brody Wells, a student at Westport Middle School, Louisville, KY, speaking at the Education Writers Association middle school conference, Louisville, April, 1995.

"Teachers, I hate to rag on them, but I wish they'd work harder to keep our interest. I know that's why my grades have slipped. The work is boring and repetitive. It takes so long, and I don't get anything out of it."
— Cecil Bell, a student at Highland Middle School, Louisville, KY, speaking at the Education Writers Association middle school conference, Louisville, April, 1995.

"The school board sends somebody once a month to observe my new teacher, and he does a good job. They never send them in to watch the people who've taught 15-20 years. They seem to be in the ruts. I think the board's observing the wrong people. When I complain to my grandmother how my math teacher never gets out of the book, she says in her day they didn't even have books. In a way, I wish I didn't have books."
— Dominic Parrott, a student at Thomas Jefferson Middle School, Louisville, KY, speaking at the Education Writers Association middle school conference, April, 1995.

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